

Afghans frequently attacked by extremist groups

PESHAWAR — Whenever UNO initiates efforts for reconciliation among the warring Afghan factions and starts repatriation of the Afghan refugees to Afghanistan number of difficulties are being created either by killing Afghans or by other means.

One may differ with economic, political and administrative policies of the present government but it must be appreciated for adopting a realistic approach towards the Afghan conflict. The government has called for a negotiated solution to the conflict which is essential for Afghanistan and for the whole region.

Through such a realistic approach, Chief Executive Gen. Pervesh Musharraf and the Foreign Minister have sent a good signal to those peace loving Afghans who have been targeted by the extremists.

However, despite such a realis-

tic approach adopted by the Pakistani authorities, the peace loving Afghans still facing threats to their lives and facing attacks against them. Mysterious attacks against the realistic minded Afghans are not new but it started soon after the 1978 Revolution in Afghanistan.

And the RAWA founder Meena Kishwar Kamal was the first victim of such attempts. Later on names of late scholars like Prof. Syed Baha Uddin Majrooh, Jamiat Ullah Jalal, Abdul Rahim Chanzai, technocrats like Wali Khan Karokhel, Abdul Ahad Khan Karzai, Fazal Haq Mujahid, Engineer Abdullah, Mohammad Hasham Khan Paktyani and others were included in the list.

A few days ago, Dr. Inaam an activist of Afghan Social Democratic Party commonly known as Afghan Millat had sustained serious injuries when some unknown people engineered attack against

him and his family members inside Peshawar city. Victim Inaam in his statement before the law enforcing agencies has outrightly rejected the impression that he was targeted due to personal enmity. He informed of living in Pakistan since a long and his realistic ap-

Peshawar Letter From Shamim Shahid

proach towards resolving of the Afghan conflict is his sole sin.

Before Dr Inaam a number of other Afghans were also mysteriously attacked and luckily survived. Amongst them Haji Saad Malook Shinwari is prominent.

He and his family members have played a key role in Afghan Jihad and associated with former Afghan President Prof. Sibghat Ullah Mujaddadi's Afghan National Liberation Front. Earlier, his elder

brother Humayoon Shinwari who had served Afghanistan as its Vice Consul General at Quetta for around four years remain on hit list and now he is facing threats to his life. Since March, Haji Saad Malook survived in three different attempts. His one car was totally damaged while he and his several colleagues have sustained serious injuries.

Such attacks and attempts are not only confined to peace loving people from nationalists and liberal political forces and groups but even the scattered activists of Hizbe Islami of Engineer Gulbadin Hekmatyar are facing same kinds of threats.

Engineer Tariq an activist of Hizbe Islami from Ghazni province who himself is staying in one of the western country, arrived here in Pakistan for attending funeral of his father in law some two months back.

He made hectic efforts to reach inside Afghanistan but he was not permitted. When he was identified as an activist of Hizbe Islami, first he was detained for a few hours and later on released to go back to Peshawar.

However, he was chased by mysterious people and after surviving in two different attempts, he flown back to west. His wife along with three children are now facing threats and are compelled to change their residents.

Now when Chief Executive Gen. Pervesh Musharraf and his team had changed the Afghan policy, therefore, they need to assure protection to these war affected targeted Afghans. Such people have a right to initiate an effort for pulling Afghanistan and its people out of existing crises. In the last two decades scores of innocent and decent Afghans have been mysteriously eliminated.

NATION

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More Afghan areas hit by drought

KABUL (AFP) - A severe drought which has thus far mainly hit southern Afghanistan is gripping more areas of the war-torn country, the United Nations said on Wednesday.

A UN weekly report said Badghis and Faryab provinces in the north west and Ghor in central Afghanistan were also seriously affected, forcing livestock owners to migrate.

"The districts of Jawan, Qades and the village of Sang Atesh in Badghis were noted as most affected," the report said.

It said 20 litres of drinking water in Sang Atesh cost around two dollars while one kilogram of meat

cost only around 20 cents.

The displaced people have moved either to the provincial capital of Qala-i-Nau or to the border with neighbouring Turkmenistan, the report said.

It added that due to fighting between the ruling Taliban and opposition forces it was difficult to gather information from Ghor province.

Families who have left drought-hit Maimana city, the provincial centre of Faryab, have headed for the northern city of Kunduz on Tajikistan's border, with an average of 70 people per day approaching the UN for assistance.

The drought, unprecedented in

30 years, has already badly hit the southern provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Oruzgan and Nimroz.

According to local officials, the entire population of the desert area of Registan, around Kandahar, has migrated to other provinces in search of water.

Taliban helicopters and trucks have been distributing water and food to the most vulnerable across the region.

Farmers in Kabul said people were selling their livestock due to shortages of fodder in southern villages, where growers, dependent on traditional irrigation, have lost the current year's crops.

Zahir for Pakistan's role to resolve Afghan conflict

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Former King Mohammad Zahir Shah has asked Pakistan to help war-affected Afghans to resolve their conflict through peaceful dialogue.

Strongly reacting to the Chief Executive Gen. Pervez Musharraf's recent statement in which he has stated to support Taliban, Zahir Shah in a radio interview has said, "we consider this stand totally harmful to Afghanistan neighbouring countries."

Elaborating his point of view Zahir Shah said, "a stable Afghanistan is not only a dire need of the Afghans but even it is beneficial to all of the neighbouring countries." He said that as a result of unrest in Afghanistan, the whole region is being affected by refu-

gees, narcotics, terrorism, unemployment and many other evils. He was of the firm belief that all the regional countries and rest of the world could easily get rid of all these problems if Afghanistan conflict is resolved through peaceful dialogue.

Former king Mohammad Zahir Shah has dispelled the impression that Afghans are engaged in confrontation on the ethnic basis. He said that Afghans had defeated the former Soviet Union. But unfortunately they could remove their internal differences through consensus. He said Afghans will not let anybody to create division among them.

Zahir Shah said that they are struggling to restore independence

Afghanistan. Such Afghanistan would establish friendly relations with all of the neighbouring countries. He also praised people from all over Pakistan for extending tremendous support to Afghans during their Jihad against former Soviet Union and called upon them to help Afghans in resolving of their internal disputes through peaceful and political ways.

In response to a question, Zahir Shah said, "we believe in the policy of noninterference in the matters of other countries and expect the same from others as well." He added that Afghanistan was badly affected due to interferences by the foreign countries and they should stop it.

NATION

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Musharraf creating rift in Afghans; Zahir

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Former Afghan monarch Zahir Shah has accused Chief Executive General Musharraf of creating rift in the Afghans.

The statement issued by Zahir Shah's office in Rome has criticised the remarks of General Pervez Musharraf made in a press conference in Islamabad on May 25 wherein he had declared support to the Taliban, reports VOA.

General Musharraf in his Press conference had stated that support of Pukhtoons is in the national interests of Pakistan adding Taliban represent the Pukhtoons.

Zahir Shah's statement says that different tribes and nationalities form the Afghan society and its

status being the Afghan society is well recognised inside and outside Afghanistan.

He said that Afghans are a united nation and could not be disintegrated.

"The Afghans have proved it during jihad against the Russians by successfully defending national sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence". The Afghans would continue to do the same, he said.

The former Afghan King condemned efforts aimed at creating rift in the Afghans terming it interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. "Such interference would create political and economic instability in Afghanistan," he added.

Afghan leader injured in attack

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR, June 1: An Afghan nationalist leader was injured when unidentified armed men attacked him here at Pawakai area on Thursday morning.

Mohammed Inam Waq, member of the Millat Party's executive council, received two pistol bullets in his right hand and one in stomach. He was admitted to the Lady Reading Hospital.

DAWN 02 JUN 2000

Taliban close two training camps in Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Following closure of two training camps in Afghanistan by Taliban, around 150 activists of various extremist groups have returned to Pakistan, it was reliably learnt.

Apart from these 150 activists, most of whom belong to the province of Punjab and Karachi, many members of these training camps have been rushed to north of Kabul to support Taliban offensive against the forces of Northern Alliance.

Reports reveal that despite rejecting allegations of imparting training to the hard-liners, the Taliban authorities have recently ordered closure of training camps in Reshkhori and Bagh-i-Daud area of Afghanistan.

Through such decisions, the Taliban have themselves endorsed the allegations of Western countries, particularly of United States, against them.

Some highly placed government sources, responsible for defending Afghanistan's western borders, have revealed that 150 of these youngsters have succeeded in entering various parts of Pakistan.

Fire destroys 300 shops in northern Afghan market

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - More than 300 shops were destroyed as fire erupted in a market in the northern Afghan town of Hairatan bordering Uzbekistan, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported Thursday.

The Pakistan-based private news service said the losses ran into hundreds of thousands of dollars. However no casualties have been reported.

The fire broke out when a gas cylinder in a shop exploded late Wednesday, engulfing rows of wooden cabins in the Hairatan market, AIP said.

The Afghan Taliban authorities struggled for 14 hours before extinguishing the fire early Thursday, it said.

The market in the river port town of Hairatan is located only a few kilometers from the Uzbekistan border.

Afghan traders used to import oil, gas and other items from across the border, storing them in Hairatan for onward shipment to other destinations within the country.

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1998 most bloody year for Afghan people

From Our Correspondent

03 JUN 2000

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PESHAWAR – Though bloodshed and destruction in Afghanistan is order of the day since invasion of the former Soviet Union but 1998 is considered most bloody year in the last two decades when thousands of people were either killed as a result of continuous in-fighting or due to lack of food and shelter in the mountains and un-populated areas.

Paktoon Sahar, a young Afghan writer, in a recently filed report reveals that Northern provinces of Afghanistan remained the battlefield throughout 1998. Such fighting reported in areas like Taloqan, Darra-i-Souf, Jabal Ul Sarraj. During this period, Taloqan was time and again bombed by Taliban, inflicting severe human and property loss to the civilians and similar was the situation in other areas. Bombing of Taloqan, Jabal Ul Sarraj and Darra-i-Souf was reported from April till September 1998.

He reminded that on May 9, 1998 central province of Bamyan was fell to Taliban and thousands of civilians fled to the adjacent mountains and hills.

The Central Province of Bamyan is dominated by Shia community commonly known as Hazara while Taliban movement is domi-

nated by Sunni community.

The Afghan writer informed that after fleeing away to the mountains, the civilians faced severe shortage of water and other food items.

Amongst them 361 children and 138 adults have lost their lives in the mountains.

After Bamyan, Yakkawalang fell to Taliban on May 14, 1998 and like of Bamyan, majority of its people also fled to the mountains and other areas. The Afghan writer reported that some 150 women and children were forcibly detached from their nears and dears and shifted to Parwan.

In both areas some 15 per cent houses, buildings and agriculture fields were badly affected when Taliban entered.

Some 21 houses are not in a position to accommodate its owners while 40 per cent livestock were eliminated when Taliban were struggling to capture Shia dominated areas in 1998.

It is recalled that some 800 Shia people from Hazarajat migrated to Kabul where they living amidst miserable conditions.

Later on majority of these Shia families shifted to Pakistan. However, Paktoon Sahar informed that after Ittehad Islami and Hizbe

Wahdat brutalities against each others, Taliban have broken away all previous records of oppression and suppressions against the Shia Afghans from central provinces in 1998.

Apart from Shias's in 1998, Taliban have targeted the Tajik Afghans on the basis of their loyalties with their main rivals like former President Prof. Burhan Ud Din Rabbani and war lord Ahmad Shah Masud. Some 1,000 Tajik adults were forcibly detached from their families. A large number of Tajik families have been shifted first to Kabul and later to Jalalabad.

He added that during this period some 2,000 people were brutally murdered and almost of them were buried in mass-graves.

Kasi for upgrading education standard of Deeni Madaris

Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Abdul Malik Kasi has urged the need for upgrading the educational standard of the deeni Madaris in the country.

Addressing ulema conference held here, he said the upgrading and enhancing the standard of educational curriculum and system of Deeni Madaris would bring the students of these institutions at par with the students of other educational institutions.

300 shops gutted in Afghanistan

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The Pakistan-based private news service said the losses ran into hundreds of thousands of dollars. However no casualties have been reported.

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The market in the river port town of Hairatan is located only a few kilometers from the Uzbekistan border.—AFP

DAWN 02 JUN 2000

'The Afghan Folio' show opens on 6th

Desk Report

ISLAMABAD—The American Center, Islamabad will host a month-long photographic exhibition entitled "The Afghan Folio" to be opened on June 6 at 5.00 pm. Mr Uxi Mufti, Executive Director of Loke Virsa will inaugurate this exhibition.

The show consists of 32 images of Afghanistan taken by Luke Powell, a renowned American photographer, during his travelling in the 1970s. Luke Powell's pictures are classical and conservative, like 19th century paintings.

His small figures in landscapes speak of man's relationship to nature and environment. The collection is an invaluable documentation of Afghanistan's cultural and environmental heritage. It provides an introductory vision of beautiful land when its inhabitants led a life in peace and unity prior to the Afghan-Soviet war and the ensuing civil conflict.



'Light and Water' by Luke Powell

The photos have been widely displayed in the US, Canada and throughout Europe, and are now being displayed for the first time in South Asia for Afghans and Pakistanis.

The Islamabad American Center welcomes all those interested in attending. Call 824-051 Ext.226 for additional information.

Pak-Afghan border meeting delayed

From Our Correspondent

QUETTA—The meeting of Pak-Afghan border delegation, which was scheduled to be held on Saturday, could not be held even on Sunday because of lack of interest by the Taliban administration, the official source confided to *The Nation*.

The delegations of both the neighbouring countries were to meet on Saturday to re-determine some pieces, measuring total about seven miles of Durand Line near Qamaruddin Karez, a Pakistan territory. It was decided between the governments of both the countries in Islamabad in the high-level meeting.

"No one would believe that a stenographer was heading the Afghan delegation and he too come with no knowledge of the meeting for determining the international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan," the sources further said.

"Afghan delegation came from across the border which was received with full protocol, but when the head of the delegation was introduced, everyone from Pakistani side first stunned then started laughing," it said.

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Afghan scholar favours Loya Jirga

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR – Advocating a centralised and acceptable government in the war-ravaged Afghanistan, chief of the Afghan Committee for Peace and National Security Dr. Amanullah Rasool, an Afghan scholar, Monday said that it could pave the way for ending the foreign interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

"We ourselves invited foreign interference in our affairs," he remarked while answering a query in an interview with daily *The Nation*.

Elaborating his point of view, he said that all Afghan leaders except former King Mohammad Zahir Shah and Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan invited foreign forces for their help.

He said that the leaders and commanders of all Afghan warring factions are trading shells, mortars and missiles just for their own loaves and fishes. As a result of this war of self-interest, Afghanistan has been destroyed and a majority of its people have migrated abroad while thousands of others have fallen victim to the meaningless confrontation.

Dr. Amanullah Rasool said that though Afghans oppose foreign interference in their personal affairs, they believe that Pakistan should go for a positive interference." Elaborating his point of view, the Afghan intellectual said that in the last 21 years Pakistan has extended tremendous support to Afghans and in the light of such an association, Pakistan can play a vital role in pulling Afghanistan and its people out of existing crises. He said that now when a majority of the Afghans are fed up with fighting and destruction in their motherland, they need Paki-

stan's help for establishment of a stable government in that country. He said that the Loya Jirga can help resolve this issue.

To a question, Dr. Amanullah Rasool, who recently returned after a detailed tour of Qandahar and Kabul where he held fruitful talks with the Taliban leaders, said that the return of peace and stability in Afghanistan is not only beneficial to Afghans but it is also in the interest of Pakistan.

He added that infrastructure of Pakistan was badly affected by the high influx of Afghan refugees. Similarly, due to introduction of modern weapons in Afghan jihad, law and order situation all over Pakistan is also deteriorating. He said Pakistan can get rid of its maximum social and economic problems only if peace returns to Afghanistan. Similarly after establishment of a peaceful atmosphere in Afghanistan, Pakistan can easily reach the consumer markets of the Central Asian Republics, he said.

When asked about his analysis of Afghanistan, Dr. Aman Ullah Rasool said: "no doubt that the Taliban have established peace and security, but it is also clear that beyond peace and security Afghans are in dire need of others for their survival as well as rebuilding and restructuring of their houses properties.

"He was of the view that Taliban alone couldn't rebuild Afghanistan. He added, that a majority of the well-to-do Afghans, who have established themselves in various foreign countries, are willing to contribute to rebuilding and restructuring of their motherland, but restrictions imposed by Taliban are a hurdle in their way.

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NATION

Afghans plotting new hijack asylum bid

LONDON (AFP) - Afghan asylum-seekers are plotting to take over a plane and fly to Britain in a repeat of a February hijacking incident. The Times newspaper reported Friday, citing a flight engineer with state airline Ariana.

The engineer, who is hiding in Britain and seeking asylum after fleeing last week, said a gang planned to take advantage of continuing lax security at Kabul airport to take over a jet on an internal flight and force it to fly to London.

An Ariana Airlines plane with around 170 people on board was hijacked in early February during an internal flight in Afghanistan.

It flew via Moscow to Stansted airport, north of London, where it remained on the tarmac for four days before police brought the hijacking to a peaceful conclusion.

Many onboard the plane requested asylum after arriving in Britain. Just 79 Afghans returned home voluntarily, while 14 people were charged with hijacking.

PC holds Afghan Food Festival

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – Pearl Continental Hotel Peshawar is going to hold a "Afghan Food Festival" for four days in Peshawar.

According to Press statement PC Peshawar has arranged Afghan Food Festival for four days from June 15 to 18, 2000.

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Tribals to support Afghans in case of foreign attack

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – Amir Niaz Ali Khan, Amir Mujahideen Azad Qabail has reaffirmed that for the sovereignty and solidarity of Afghanistan, tribesmen would extend all sort of support to their Afghan brothers.

In a declaration issued to Press on Thursday, Amir Niaz Ali Khan said Pakhtoons and tribesmen are considering Afghanistan their home and bound to protect it. In this regard, he diverted attention towards the fact that Pakhtoon Azad Qabail have always opposed every sort of aggression and interferences in affairs of Afghanistan and extended due support and co-operation to Afghans.

He recalled that during the colonial rule, the tribesmen HAVE

blocked the advancement of the British army. Later during the so-called cold war, the tribesmen have not only denounced the former Soviet Union aggression against Afghanistan but even backed the Afghans in their Jihad.

Chief of Azad Qabail Mujahideen has said that though they made their best for resolving of internal rifts amongst the Afghans but due to foreign interference in affairs of Afghanistan, they had failed to do so.

As a result of such rifts amongst the Afghans, it has become a safe heaven for the foreign forces and their puppets. And now the Russian Federation was encouraged of threatening Afghanistan which he said could be

considered outcomes of ongoing civil war like situation in Afghanistan.

Amir Niaz Ali Khan while denouncing such threat had made it clear that whatever may be the nature of internal rifts amongst the Afghans but all of them are determined to forge unity among their ranks for foiling any sort of aggression against Afghanistan. In this connection, he made it clear that Tribesmen would again play their role like of past. He called upon Afghan factions to resolve their internal rifts through a meeting of Loya Jirga and go for establishment of an acceptable government which should go for the restoration of Afghanistan's lost identity.

World urged to stop Russia from attacking Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – The Afghan Council for Understanding and National Unity, while denouncing the Russian recent threat to Afghanistan, said it is dangerous to the global peace, therefore, world community must take its notice.

The Council commonly known as *Shura-i-Tafahum* in its communique issued here on Thursday has expressed severe anger over the Russian threat to Afghanistan and stated that it is an act contrary to international laws. In fact, such a threat would go against the Russian interests.

The Afghan Council reminded that Afghanistan lacks a centralised authority which has encour-

aged Russia to issue such statements. A decade back former Soviet Union was disintegrated because of Afghan war. It stressed for transfer of power to an acceptable government which is possible through convening a meeting of the traditional *loya jirga*.

The council has called upon the global community to take an early notice of the Russian threat and lack of a centralised authority in Afghanistan.

Both the issues could be addressed according to wishes and expectations of Afghans who are sick of ongoing fighting in their motherland.

Meanwhile, the Afghan ulema

and commanders residing in Munda refugees camp in their meeting have also denounced the Russian threat and said that Afghans irrespective of their internal rifts are determined to jointly foil such type of foreign aggression.

The meeting was attended by a large number of Afghans and addressed beside others by Ghulam Sarwar Hazratyar Sardar Wali, Abdullah Nasri, Dr, Shehzada, Sherin Dil Nasri, Haji Zar Jan, Haji Gul Agha and others. The speakers have expressed grave concern over Russian threats to Afghanistan and they urged Afghan to forge unity amongst their ranks for foiling such threats.

Ulema urge world to recognise Taliban govt

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - A number of leading ulema and religious figures from Afghanistan residing in Peshawar have announced their support to Taliban and demanded of the international community to recognise their legal government as they hold control over 90 per cent of Afghanistan.

These ulema have made this announcement during a Press conference here on Monday and said that all of them have assembled here to denounce the recent threat of Russian Federation and negative approach of the West towards the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan.

Maulvi Naqeeb Ullah, Maulvi Abdul Ghani and Maulana Rukan Ud Din Attique were prominent amongst more than four dozen ulema and religious figures from all over Afghanistan.

Reading out the written declaration earlier adopted by Ulema in their meeting, Maulvi Abdul Ghani declared that all of them have decided of honouring all the orders of Amir Ul Momineen Mullah Mohammad Omer Akhund, supreme leader of Taliban.

They also reaffirmed of rendering every sort of sacrifice on his directives for the supremacy of Islam and sovereignty and solidarity of Afghanistan.

In this connection, they have announced backing all policies of Taliban and declared of resisting all sorts of aggression against that country.

Referring to recent Russian threat to Afghanistan, the declaration states that all the religious scholars, ulema and students are willing to honour the directives of Amir Ul Momineen in this connection. "We believe Jihad is the sole and easy way for reaching to heav-

en, therefore, for resisting the Russian aggression, they are determined to wage another jihad against Russia and hopeful of its victory like in the past. In response to a question, Maulana Rukan Ud Din said that Russian's contradiction is ambiguous and doubtful so it should apologise.

Demanding recognition of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan, the religious scholars said that UNO must follow principle of justice and equality.

It is surprising that UNO is reluctant to recognise Afghanistan though there is peace in the country. The UNO being a world body must not receive American dictation.

When diverted attentions toward the policies of Afghan opposition leaders like Prof. Rabbani, Engineer Gulbadin Hekmatyar, Prof. Abdul Rab Rasool Sayaf, Ahmad Shah Masud and Gen. Rashid Dostam, Maulana Rukan Ud Din said, "Islam declares Jihad against all those who create hurdles for an Islamic government to run the affairs of the country under Shari-ah.

He said there is an Islamic government in Afghanistan, therefore, their opposition is not only against Afghanistan and its people but against Islamic norms.

Maulana Naqeeb Ullah claimed that Russian Generals have been seen in Panjsher, therefore, it is crystal clear that Masud is seeking help of Russians against Islamic government.

At the same time, he justified Pakistani authorities presence in Afghanistan and said that government have the right to get support from other governments according to agreements.

Zahir Shah seeks world support for his peace plan

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The former Afghan monarch Muhammad Zahir Shah has sought world community's help for his plan to restore peace in Afghanistan.

In a statement issued in Rome, the ex Afghan King hoped that the world community would support and back his efforts for restoration of peace in Afghanistan and strengthening national unity. He said that international community should assist and help him in laying the foundation stone for the independence and sovereignty through free will of the people of Afghanistan.

Zahir Shah called on international community to extend help and assistance to the drought stricken people of Afghanistan. The ex-Afghan king said that the drought has hit Afghanistan for the second consecutive year adding to the problems and hardships of the Afghans.

The statement said that water table has receded and water resources are drying up. The prices of food commodities are soaring at a time when the country's economy is ruined as a result of twenty years war.

He said that the Afghan warring factions are unable to assist millions of drought affected people faced with serious threat. "I am committed to serve the people of Afghanistan and appeal to world community to address to the threats posed by drought to the people of Afghanistan and I request the Afghan warring factions to avoid road blockades and stop war so that the Afghans could be rescued", he said.

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15 JUN 2000

16 fall victim to undiagnosed disease in Afghan province

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — At least 16 persons have died in village Shor of Herat Province of Afghanistan due to undiagnosed diseases. WHO and MOPH are investigating the matter in this regard.

In the meantime measles has broken out in Pashmol area of Panjwai (Kandahar), Afghanistan among the children of Baloch Kochi (nomad) and about 150 under five years have been vaccinated in this connection.

The vaccines have been provided by Ibn-e-Sina, a national NGO in the area, however, no death has been reported so far. According to United Nations Co-ordinator for Afghanistan the local authorities have stated that they have provided various food items to some 400 newly arrived Kochi families from the Registan desert, temporarily settled in Panjwai district of Kan-

dahar province. The local authorities in Ghor have provided a list of 46 villages, in eight districts of the province.

The report added that these 46 villages are all severely affected by drought.

The UN report said that, in Kandahar city, UNCHR is working to supply water. In this regard, work is in progress to repair of water pipe line and replace the damaged pipes.

During the past week, 95 meter of damaged pipes were repaired in 6 districts, which connected 200 more families with city water network, the report claimed.

Meanwhile, the UN office is without potable water for the last three weeks. However, after drilling down to 50 meters, water is found, it added. The UN Kandahar, near the UNOPS office, has

also been without water for the last couple of weeks and the drilling will begin soon.

The campaign to eradicate polio is in full swing in Afghanistan. It cured 4.5 million Afghan Children under the age of five years, report said.

He said vitamin A was also administered to all children aged 12 to 59 months. Based on experience in the May round, it was decided to include more female volunteers in the June round.

The UN report claimed that an international medical team of eight has returned from Rustaq after conducting a ten day medical clinic over there.

Three SNI staff members joined the team from Tajikistan and several members of SNI local and international staff based in Afghanistan.

Afghans planning to hijack another plane: paper

By Nasir Malick

LONDON, June 17: Afghan asylum-seekers are planning to hijack another plane by taking advantage of lax security at Kabul airport, an Afghan flight engineer, who has taken asylum in Britain, has been quoted by a local newspaper as saying.

According to The Times, the plot was revealed by a flight engineer, formerly working with Afghan state airline Ariana, when he applied for asylum in Britain.

He also claimed that his wife and son had been kidnapped by an Afghan gang, which was planning the hijack when he refused to cooperate with them to smuggle

weapons and explosives on board.

He told the authorities that a gang planned to take over a jet on an internal flight this month and divert it to London.

The flight engineer told the British authorities that the would-be hijackers knew of his forthcoming flight schedule and planned to take over an internal flight and then divert it to London en route Moscow, taking the same flight path as the hijacked Afghan Boeing 727 that landed at Stansted airport in February.

He said the hijackers bribed

Kabul airport staff to let around 40 of their relatives on board, allowing them through x-ray checks with guns in their luggage, the Times said.

The engineer used an overseas flight to begin his defection and when the plane landed, allegedly in Delhi, he left fellow crew members and began a trip to Dover, where he sought asylum, it was reported.

The story comes at a time when 12 men are awaiting trial for the Stansted hijack, after which only 79 people returned home, with 32 hostages remaining in a British hotel.

DAWN 18 JUN 2000

'Loya Jirga can solve Afghan imbroglio'

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR — After holding detailed and comprehensive talks with high ranking officials of United States of America and United Nations, a delegation of peace-loving, democratic minded Afghans, planning to leave for United Kingdom, France and other European countries in coming a few days.

"The delegation during its stay would explain meaning, purposes and objectives of the proposed Loya Jirga which is considered an established historical institution of Afghanistan and helps its people in resolving their internal issues," remarked former Afghan foreign minister Hamid Karzai during a detailed interview with daily *The Nation* here at Peshawar.

Mr. Karzai recently returned from United States after a detailed tour whereas he and his colleagues held discussion on current situation of Afghanistan as well as on the peace prospects in that country.

Such delegations have been constituted in the light of Rome, Italy conference with a view to pave way for convening a meeting of the traditional Loya Jirga whereas genuine representatives of war affected Afghans would resolve

their internal matters on one hand and would build up a consensus amongst them about a future set up on the other.

In this connection, members of such a conference are now contacting concerned quarters to remove all obstacles before Loya Jirga. Mr. Hamid Karzai is playing a key role in such efforts and soon after return from USA he rushed to Peshawar on Thursday where he began side holding meetings with a large number of Afghans from every walk of life held a detailed meeting with the French Under-secretary for Foreign Affairs at Hotel Pearl Continental, Peshawar.

"I am happy of my US visit," was Hamid Karzai replying in response to a question. He said that during a visit to USA, he and his colleagues have explained historical background, structure, functions and influence of the Loya Jirga. He added that, so far, they succeeded in their objectives and now not only US but even a large number of other countries recognised the Loya Jirga as an Afghan institution. The world has realised that Loya Jirga is not only ensuring resolving more than two decades long conflict in Afghanistan

the interest of the global community.

He added that Loya Jirga is the sole way for resolving the conflict and those who intend for peace and stability in all over the world need to support them.

He dispelled the impression that their process is very slow and it could take time.

He added that despite several hurdles and obstacles, they made valuable achievements in the last few months and now majority of the people are going to endorse their realistic approach towards resolving the issue.

He was further confident of mustering support of all other countries and forces who want peace and progress in all over the world. He added that after USA, now they are planning to start a detailed tour of European countries whereas they would exchange views on the subject with high ranking authorities of that country. Later on delegates could be sent to Russia, Pakistan, Iran and other countries.

To another question, former Afghan foreign minister said that increasing interference in affairs of Afghanistan is the lone reason for ongoing unrest, destruction and

bloodshed in that country.

In this respect, they have time and again called for an end to such interference as it is not only harmful to Afghanistan and its people but it could be considered a serious threat to the regional peace in particular and rest of the world in general.

He was of the view that all the world countries, particularly neighbors of Afghanistan need to extend maximum help to them for pulling Afghanistan and its people out of present crises.

Answering to a question, Hamid Karzai said, "We have already contacted and spoken to a large number of Afghans from across the section and very soon we will speak to the Islamic Movement of Taliban and Northern Alliance. We believe that the common men in Afghanistan is absolutely in favour of the Afghanistan history and traditions and determined to protect its national unity, territorial responsibility and sovereignty of that country."

He added, "Loya Jirga owned to Afghans and they having not only the right of participation but they are bound to contribute in convening its meeting."

DAWN 18 JUN 2000

Afghanistan & the Taliban

Pakistan's domestic politics and the economy have been adversely affected by the spillover of the Afghanistan conflict, says DR. HASAN-ASKARI RIZVI

Afghanistan has been at war with itself since the withdrawal of Soviet troops in February 1989, producing negative spillover on the neighbouring states. The mutual jealousies and distrust, non-accommodative disposition and tribal ethos of the mujahideen groups have proved to be the major obstacles to the establishment of a government in Kabul that enjoyed widespread acceptability amongst various mujahideen and ethnic groups. The armed confrontation amongst the mujahideen groups caused no less physical destruction and loss of human life than what happened during the period of Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.

The war-torn Afghanistan witnessed the emergence of the Taliban in the fall of 1994 in the Kandahar area as a movement of the students of religious schools for establishing stability in Afghanistan. The Taliban movement expanded its political and military domain gradually. It dislodged the tottering Rabbani government in Kabul in September 1996 and moved to establish its hold over about 80 per cent of Afghan territory. The Taliban faced a tough opposition from the Northern Alliance, a combine of non-Pashun ethnic elements that entrenched itself in the Mazar-i-Sharif area.

The Taliban created an extremely orthodox Islamic government in Kabul, and totally disregarded the pluralist dynamics of Islam. These developments are now an important subject of academic dialogue that attempts to address several questions: Who are the Taliban and how did they manage to establish their rule? What are their connections with the Pakistani state and society? How do they manage their affairs and what is their worldview? What is the nature of their interaction with the neighbouring states? Do they promote transnational terrorism and drug trafficking?

These questions have been tackled effectively in Ahmad Rashid's book: *Taliban: Islam and the new great game in Central Asia*. The author is an internationally known Pakistani journalist-scholar with a vast knowledge and experience of Afghanistan and Central

Asia. His book demonstrates his skills to critically focus on the intra-Afghan, regional and global implications of the Taliban rise to power. The book also examines the major causes of their rise, the nature and disposition of their leadership and especially their political management. It also deliberates on the implications of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan for Pakistan and their connections with global terrorism.

This study is a valuable addition to the recently published books on the Taliban. These include William Moley (ed), *Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and Taliban* (London: Hurst and Co, 1998). Ahmad Rashid has contributed a chapter to this book; Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Peter Marsden, *The Taliban* (London: ZED books, 1999). Another book entitled *Unholy Wars* by John K. Cooley (London: Pluto Press, 2000) also covers some of the above questions.

Ahmad Rashid traces the origin of the Taliban movement to three interrelated factors. First, the desire of the government of Pakistan in 1994 to establish a secure land route for trade with Central Asia from Quetta to Kandahar, Herat to Ashkhabad, the capital of Turkmenistan. Pakistan offered to rehabilitate roads but the Afghan local commanders controlling different parts of the route were to cooperate. Second, there existed a vacuum in Afghanistan due to complete disintegration of communist power structure, failure of the mujahideen to produce a coherent administrative set up, and the elimination of the traditional tribal leadership. In such a situation, a united and determined group could fill the gap.

Third, a host of former and present

Afghan students of Islamic religious schools in the Kandahar area and Pakistan's NWFP and Balochistan wanted to change the environment of insecurity. A group of these students over-ran a transport centre and a small military based of Hikmatyar's men near Pakistan-Afghan border in October 1994. Pakistan's transporters and the ISI supported this action. Later when Pakistani trade convey on way to Turkmenistan was taken hostage by local commanders in the Kandahar area, the same Taliban elements rescued the Pakistani trade mission which proceeded to Turkmenistan. This established a relationship between the Taliban and the Pakistan ISI. Later, Pakistan encouraged Saudi Arabia to extend material support to the Taliban.

The Taliban represent a generation of young Afghans who suffered heavily in the war; most of them experienced nothing but violence from their childhood. They were from the "poorest, most conservative and least literate southern Pushtoon provinces" (p.110). Most of them had spent some years in the Islamic schools of the Deoband tradition in Afghanistan and parts of Balochistan and NWFP. The *Darul Uloom Haqqania* at Akkora Khattak (NWFP) and the Binori Town *Darul Uloom* in Karachi have played a key role in shaping their disposition.

The Taliban movement entered a new phase with the assumption of power in Kabul as it tried to create a highly orthodox Islamic state which reflected their narrow rural and extremist worldview. The emphasis on coercion for enforcing their view of Islam amounted to religious bigotry that made them intolerant towards other interpretations of Islam and ethnic minorities. Women were excluded from the polity and the

economy.

Their policies brought them in conflict with the international community. Ahmad Rashid offers the details of this conflict. He also discusses their problems with Iran and the CARs as well as the politics of oil and gas pipelines.

The linkages between the Taliban authorities and drug trafficking and smuggling of goods into Pakistan are examined in this study. Another interesting discussion deals with the Taliban role in promoting global jihad. Rashid discusses how the CIA-ISI encouraged the volunteers from other Muslim countries, especially the Arabs, to join Afghanistan resistance vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. With the exit of the Soviet Union, these volunteers shifted their attention to Muslim causes elsewhere, targeted their home governments viewed as un-Islamic and corrupt, and challenged the interests of the US. This created serious rift between the Taliban and the West, especially the US, which labelled these activities as terrorism.

The Taliban problems with Iran and strains in Pakistan-Iran relations due to Pakistan's support to the Taliban are also examined in the regional political context.

Though chapter 14 focuses exclusively on the multifaceted impact of the Afghan conflict on Pakistan, the author raises these issues and themes repeatedly in other parts of the book. Pakistan's domestic politics and the economy have been adversely affected by the spillover of the Afghanistan conflict. The smuggling, proliferation of weapons, the growing use of narcotics in Pakistan, and stepped up violence threaten the fabric of the society. The author talks of the linkages between Pakistan's extreme Islamic groups like the *Sipah-e-Sahaba*, *Harkat-ul-Ansar*

(*Harkat-ul-Mujahideen*) and the Taliban. The growing Islamic-sectarian violence, religious intolerance towards religious minorities constitute serious threats to effective political and economic management in Pakistan.

What appears to be the most alarming development is the growing strength of Taliban type movements in parts of Balochistan and NWFP. Such movement may not spread all over the country. But two trends pose a threat to civic order. First, several extreme Islamic groups have created a core that is armed with sophisticated weapons and trained in Afghanistan. These armed groups are used to advance partisan religious agenda. Some of these armed groups have broken away from their parent organization and now operate autonomously. They use violence as an instrument of policy.

Second, the growing number of *madrasas* and hard core cadre has increased the street power of the Islamic groups. They may not get elected in the elections but have acquired enough capability to take on every government in streets. This gives them power to blackmail the governments. When religious-sectarian violence is coupled with ethnic violence and the stepped up use of sophisticated weapons by anti-social elements, the state often finds it difficult to perform its basic duty of protection of life and property of its citizens.

Ahmad Rashid is not optimistic about the capacity of the state of Pakistan to cope with these pressures. However, he sees some hope for the Pakistani state if peace is restored in Afghanistan. Both the outside powers and the competing domestic interests in Afghanistan will have to accommodate each other. A weak government in Kabul with a high degree of autonomy to the regions may offer a framework for a political settlement, he argues.

Pakistan has no option but to continue striving for an amicable resolution of intra-Afghan conflict because the cost of failure is going to be extremely high.

Taliban: Islam and the new great game in Central Asia, Ahmad Rashid, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), price in Pakistan: Rs.895

Foreign intervention main cause of Afghan infighting

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – The increasing foreign intervention in Afghanistan has developed internal rifts among Afghans and it is considered the main hurdle in the way of negotiated solution to the conflict.

During an interview, Shehzada Masud an active leader of the Great National United Islamic Front of Afghanistan told *The Nation* that most of Afghans side of fighting in their motherland and now they are keenly desirous for return of peace and stability. In this respect, they are supporting the peace initiatives of former king Mohammad Zahir Shah.

In response to a question, Shehzada Masud said that Afghanistan has become a battle-field due to foreign countries, forces and groups. These foreigners have not only destroyed Afghanistan and its institutions but even they have deprived the Afghans of their just right of self-determination. The world needs to end foreign interference in affairs of Afghanistan and when such interference is being stopped then it could be easy for Afghans to restore peace and stability.

Answering a question, Shehzada Masud admitted that in absence of

elections infrastructure is impossible in Afghanistan. He was of the view that convening a meeting of the traditional Loya Jirga is more easy and comfortable compare to fresh elections.

Further advocating in favour of the Loya Jirga, Shehzada Masud said that it could be considered a sole way for giving just right of self-determination to Afghans. He added that so far beside million of Afghans, United States of America, France, Japan and several other countries along with UNO also favour formation of a broad based government in Afghanistan which is possible through a meeting of the Loya Jirga. He called upon warring factions and regional and neighbouring countries of Afghanistan to help resolve issue.

Referring to the recent changes in Pakistan's Afghan policies, Shehzada Masud said, "Afghans are happy as Pakistani authorities have changed their peace." He added that in this respect they appreciate statements of Chief Executive Gen. Pervez Musharraf and Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar Khan and suggested them to declare their support with the peace initiatives of former king Mohammad Zahir

Shah. He said that restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan is not only essential for Afghans but it is also beneficial to Pakistan and its people.

Shehzada Masud said that two different delegations have recently concluded talks with the UNO and USA authorities and now an other delegation is planning to visit United Kingdom, France and other European countries. He added that a delegation in the near future likely to start negotiations with the Pakistani, Iranian and other Central Asian Republics. Likewise, most of the members of Rome, Italy Conference are in close contacts with Taliban, Northern Alliance and other leaders. He was hopeful of these efforts positive and fruitful results.

He added that only through a Loya Jirga meeting, peace and stability could return in Afghanistan while genuine representatives can build up a consensus among them about the future set up of that country. He called upon global community as well as Afghans to help in early convening a meeting of Loya Jirga which could ensure pulling Afghanistan and its people out of existing crises and bloodshed.

NATION 23 JUN 2000

Former Afghan commanders propose national army

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — For the restoration of Afghanistan's lost national and Islamic identity, the former military officers and Mujahideen commanders have decided to re-organise national army of the war-affected country.

During a press conference here on Thursday leading figures have disclosed their plan along with objectives in presence of around 100 ex-servicemen from all over Afghanistan. Lt. Gen. Marjan, Lt. Gen. Mohammad Muneer Mangal, Lt. Gen. Mohib Ullah Mohmand, Brig. Stana Gul and Brig. Ebad Ullah were prominent among them and besides reading out the written texts regarding their objectives, they also read out a declaration through which they called for an early cease-fire in Afghanistan. They urged leaders of all warring factions politicians, intellectuals and other to find out a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Highlighting objectives of reorganising of the national army of Afghanistan, Brig. Ibaad Ullah said that it meant to protect sovereignty, freedom and solidarity of Afghanistan. He added that due to lack of unity and organised national army Afghanistan faces serious destruction. He said that along with destruction of its infrastructure, Afghanistan has become a din of heroin and subversive ac-

tivities. In this connection, all of them have decided to come forward for reorganisation of the national army to wipe out all such evils like increasing confrontation amongst the Afghans, narcotics, subversive activities and for restoration of lost identity of Afghanistan and its people.

In response to a question, Lt. Gen. Marjan said that no one ignores presence of the national army in Afghanistan but in past such force was used by political parties for safeguarding their own interests. Now he claimed, "we are determined to keep in mind larger interests of Afghanistan and its people instead of becoming tools of a particular force." He said that in this respect they would honour wishes and expectations of common Afghans who are dishearted of ongoing fighting and destruction in their motherland.

Similarly, the national army of Afghanistan in future would not affiliate itself with a particular group or force, was his reply when his attention was drawn towards a number of political groups like of former king Mohammad Zahir Shah and other. "We believe in democracy and in such a process each and every one have the right to contest elections. But the national army would back decision of the mandated people," he remarked

and repeated." we would try to assemble the Afghans on one forum and would safeguard country's internal and external interests. He added that Afghans from all over the world need to back them in such a sacred goal.

When questioned that whether it is possible for them to assemble those army-men and Mujahideen commanders who remained rivals in past, Mohammad Muneer Mangal answered in positive. He said the situation has changed and they are hopeful about an early reconciliation among leaders of Afghanistan. He added that their contacts with a large number of Afghans are in progress and they would be able to achieve their goals very soon. He said that such steps would also help to compel the warring factions to end fighting and confrontation.

In response to a question, Brig. Ibaad Ullah said that they are working on such a plan for the last two years and so far they have enrolled some 18,000 people. He informed that so far they have discussed the idea with 850 people including politicians, intellectuals, and technocrats. He was of the firm belief that more and more Afghans, particularly the former servicemen would back them in this plan. He added that Afghan conflict has crossed over its borders and now it became a regional and international issue. In this respect they also handed over the proposals and suggestions to around 26 countries of the world so far.

Through a declaration, the ex-servicemen from Afghanistan have also asked for an early cease-fire in their motherland and called upon Afghans to contribute in the efforts aimed at resolving conflict through peaceful and political ways. They also denounced the recent threats of Russian federation to Afghanistan and made it clear that for the protection of sovereignty and solidarity of Afghanistan, each and every Afghan is determined to sacrifice their lives.



A former Commander addressing a Press conference in Peshawar on Thursday.—Staff photo by Tariq Aziz

Afghan traditional jirga backs Zahir's formula

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – A traditional Afghan Jirga attended by elders, ulema and jehadic commanders from various parts of Afghanistan while announcing support in favour of former king Mohammad Zahir Shah peace initiatives and convening of the traditional Loya Jirga, has asked the global community to help them in implementation of such a plan.

The traditional jirga met at Razmak of North Waziristan Agency whereas ulema, commanders, tribal chieftains, former technocrats from Paktya, Paktika, Ghazni, Maidan, Wardag, Logar, Balkh and Jozjan province attend it. Beside other host Ahmad Shah Rehmati addressed the Jirga and highlighted its objectives

Later on the Jirga was addressed by representatives and nominees from all over Afghanistan and most of them have denounced the ongoing bloodshed and uncertainty in their motherland.

They unanimously backed the proposal regarding an early negotiated solution to the Afghan conflict. Similarly, they also advocated in favour of intra-Afghan dialogues which would

enable them of building up a consensus to set up a accepted government.

Through a resolution the jirga has unanimously backed former king Mohammad Zahir Shah peace formula and declared that only through a meeting of the traditional loya jirga, the long awaited conflict could be resolved.

It urged Afghans to realise their responsibilities regarding pulling Afghanistan out of existing crises.

It also urged common Afghans to help democratic Afghans for convening a meeting of the traditional Loya Jirga.

The traditional jirga through another resolution has denounced the ongoing fighting and hostilities between the warring Afghan factions and had asked for an early cease-fire to such fighting. In this respect, it urged United Nations, Organisation of Islamic Countries, all regional and neighbouring countries to pressurise the warring factions to end fighting in the country.

It also asked for an early end to every sort of foreign interference in affairs of Afghanistan.

Resentment over Hekmatyar's statement

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – The Peshawar based Council for Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan has expressed sever resentment over recent remarks of an Afghan leader and chief of his faction Hizbe Islami Engineer Gulbadin Hekmatyar against the institution of Afghanistan.

Through its communique issued here on Thursday, CUNUA commonly known as Shura-i-Tafahum Afghanistan informed that Hekmatyar through a radio interview in order to please his Iranian hosts, has come up once again with the most outrageous allegations by saying it is a US conspiracy and that Loya Jirga had never given birth to national leadership.

He said Hekmatyar remained ignorant of the glorious Afghan history.

The CUNUA reminds Hekmatyar of the fact that Rabbani and Masood, whom he now opposes, were his comrades who had rewarded him the slot of Prime Minister. Thus cannot fool any Afghan by raising such ridiculous points. Moreover, it was Hekmatyar who ruined Kabul.

Of course, once a legal central authority is being established in Afghanistan, Hekmatyar would be defeated

NATION 22 JUN 2000

NATION
30 JUN 2000

Haemorrhagic disease breaks out in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - An 'acute haemorrhagic fever syndrome' has broken out in an isolated village in western Afghanistan and United Nations experts said Thursday they feared it could spread to the nearby city of Herat.

Fifteen people have died from the disease since May and another 25 are possibly infected, three of whom are being treated in a specially set up isolation unit in Herat city hospital, World Health Organisation experts said.

Victims died within less than two weeks of infection, with symptoms including headaches, fevers and vomiting.

In its advanced stages massive internal haemorrhaging occurred, with patients vomiting and defecating blood, bleeding into the skin and from the nose, urinary

tract and gums.

The still unidentified disease was carried by ticks and was highly contagious through contact with ticks or infected animals and humans, they said.

WHO medical officer Kande-Bure O'Bai Kamara, who flew to Herat from Geneva last week to join a WHO team tasked with investigating the outbreak, said the disease was being examined and results were expected within days.

'The samples have gone to South Africa and we're waiting for the tests,' he told AFP after his arrival in Islamabad, Pakistan.

'Clinically it's comparable with CCHF (Crimean Congo Haemorrhagic Fever) but we still have to wait for the laboratory confirmation before we know for sure.'

CCHF, which is of the same family as Ebola, is the name given to a disease first detected in the Crimea in 1944 and again in the Congo in 1956. It has also been found in Asia and the Middle East.

Its last outbreaks were in Pakistan and Afghanistan in 1998.

Kamara said the WHO was working closely with the health authorities in Herat to limit the spread of the disease. Afghanistan is ruled by the fundamentalist Taliban militia.

He said it could spread from where it appeared in Shor Qara Gul village, Gulran district, to Herat city unless people caring for the victims were informed of how to avoid contraction.

'I am concerned about it spreading but we have done health education and set up isolation units,' he said.

NATION 23 JUN 2000

Afghan peace process flounders over POWs

By Anwer Sindhur



The Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan, Moulvi Sayed Mohammad Haqqani, gestures while speaking to journalists in Islamabad on Saturday. Also seen is Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, designated envoy to the United Nations. -Staff photo by Ishaque Chaudhry

ISLAMABAD - The Organisation of Islamic Summit (OIC) contact group's efforts to engage the Taliban and the Northern Alliance in peace talks have stumbled over the hurdle of prisoner-of-war exchanges, senior Afghan diplomats said Saturday.

"The POW exchanges were to take place with the involvement of the International Committee of the Red Cross, but this is continuously being postponed by the Northern Alliance," said Moulvi Sayed Mohammad Haqqani, Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan.

The POW exchange between the two warring parties in Afghanistan was agreed at the second round of OIC-sponsored peace talks held in Jeddah last month.

A third round was scheduled to have been convened in Islamabad followed by another meeting at OIC Headquarters at the end of the month. However, the limited progress made at last month's session has

controlled by the Northern Alliance," Ambassador Haqqani said. He saw a link between the threatened sanctions and the recent tension on the border with Uzbekistan.

Russian-piloted jets on two occasions last week violated Afghan airspace in a sabre-rattling exercise aimed at forcing the Taliban to shut down training camps in Afghanistan allegedly used by Muslim radical groups fighting against the secular Uzbek government.

However, Ambassador Haqqani refrained from directly criticising the Uzbek government, which he said was under tremendous pressure from the Russian Federation.

"Let me reiterate that we want normal and cordial relations with all our neighbours," he maintained. Instead, he recounted his recent conversation with the Uzbek envoy based in Islamabad, whom he had "reminded" of the role of the Afghan people in helping Uzbekistan break free of the former Soviet Union. "I told him that if any attacks took place, it would be

from the Uzbek side of the border. That would entail a massive military build-up of Russian forces and result in Uzbekistan losing its independence," the Afghan ambassador said.

Ambassador Haqqani said there had been no untoward incident since the airspace violations. The threat of war with Russia was also addressed by Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, the Taliban government's Permanent Representative-designate to the United Nations.

"We have made our preparations against the Putin government. We aren't afraid. If they do something, it will be their mistake," he warned. Mujahid asserted that the Afghan factions would set aside their differences in the face of external aggression and join forces, as was the case in the past.

But he did not consider the Russian president's rhetoric to be a precursor to war. "He is only seeking to address his domestic audience," he said.

"These unilateral sanctions will result in the re-ignition of the war in Afghanistan and cause it to be recognised only by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates."

NATION 11 JUN 2000

Zahir Shah has no role to play: Taliban

NATION 12 JUN 2000

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Afghanistan ruling Taliban said former Afghan monarch Zahir Shah has no role to play in Afghan politics.

"We neither recognize nor trust Zahir Shah.

He is only being used for propaganda," Taliban permanent envoy in New York Abdul Hakim Mujahid has said.

Talking to a group of reporters here Saturday night Mujahid said the former Afghan King can not bring peace, as he has no programme.

The former monarch, living in exile in Rome, has launched peace initiative to pave the way for Afghan traditional 'Loya Jirga' (grand assembly). He dispatched various delegations to several countries including the United States, Pakistan, Iran as well as Afghanistan for talks with the ruling Taliban and opposition Northern Alliance.

Mujahid said Taliban are unaware of any visit by Zahir Shah's

emissaries and said, "We have been hearing about such Zahir Shah delegation for a couple of years".

The United States recently announced support for Zahir Shah's proposed 'loya jirga' when a delegation of the former King held talks with State Department officials in Washington.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said in an interview with IRNA that Islamabad would support 'loya jirga' or any other agreement after Afghans endorse such proposals.

Mujahid said Mr. Zahir Shah is doing drawing room politics and now the West is also not satisfied with his role. He said differences have emerged within his family. "We do not have any expectations from him".

The Taliban envoy said that majority of Afghans believe that Soviet invaded Afghanistan because of Zahir Shah's close association with Russians.

Taliban release alleged Arab spy

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Afghanistan ruling Taliban have released an Arab spy due to poor health condition, a Taliban spokesman said in Afghan Southern Town of Kandahar on Tuesday.

Ahmed Basem Abu Almutasim was released a few days ago from Kandahar after he was convicted by Taliban court on spying secret information to a foreign state, Taliban spokesman Sayyed Tayyab Agha said on phone from Kandahar.

NATION

14 JUN 2000

Afghanistan to import wheat from Turkmenistan

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - A Taliban delegation, headed by chairman of the Afghan Chamber of Commerce, Moulvi Abdul Haleem Haleemi, is visiting Turkmenistan for talks on import of wheat to Afghanistan.

Moulvi Haleemi told VoA he has also held talks with a number of Afghans based in Turkmenistan and these Afghans have agreed to return to their country and continue their trade.

Haleemi said that the objective behind his visit was to import wheat from Turkmenistan and meet the Afghans there.

He said he held talks with Afghans there, telling them that conducive atmosphere was prevailing in Afghanistan for trade because there was complete security and no hurdle was there in trade, he said.

NATION

30 JUN 2000

World urged to stop foreign interference in Afghanistan

A drastic change has been noticed in the policies of Taliban when one of their leading figures has confessed that foreign interference in affairs of Afghanistan is the main cause of crisis and denounced the global community not helping to prevent the same.

According to reports from across the border, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, a foreign office spokesman during a Press briefing in Kabul said, "we are unable to ensure complete protection to human rights in Afghanistan due to increasing foreign interference in the affairs of our motherland."

Despite sever insistence, the foreign office spokesman was reluctant to disclose names of those foreign countries and forces which were involved in interference in Afghanistan, everybody knows about them", he remarked.

However, the official has shown resentment over what he called negative and unrealistic role of global community.

He said that despite frequent appeals and requests, UNO and other influential world fora had failed to help and stop such countries of doing so.

He said that instead of adopting an unrealistic attitude towards the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan,

the world needs to take a notice of interference in the affairs of Afghanistan.

It may be mentioned here that it is first time that any Taliban leader had made such a confession and asked the global community to help them in discouraging all those foreign countries and forces which are involved in this act.

Many times people of Afghanistan have raised voice against the increasing interference in Afghanistan.

However, no one from the world

Peshawar Letter

From Shamim Shahid

has diverted attentions to such hue and cry.

But now when changes are visible in Pakistan's Afghan policy, Taliban leaders have not only made a confession but even they are now asking the global community to help them get rid of such forces which have converted the beautiful Afghanistan into ruins. Interference in affairs of Afghanistan is not new thing but it started with demarcation of the Durand Line in 1893.

The outcome of such attempts could be witnessed by disintegration of former Soviet Union.

Despite failure of the former British rulers and former Soviet Union, a number of countries are still working to destabilised Afghanistan.

However, such countries do not know that people of Afghanistan want negotiated settlement of the issue.

He claimed that now situation is changed and it is impossible for the foreign countries and forces to block the Afghans to find out peaceful solution.

In past whenever efforts were initiated for a reconciliation among the Afghans, those who were engaged in a proxy war in that country, have sabotaged such efforts.

Even for achieving these nefarious objectives, these foreign countries and forces have misused the global fora like United Nation, Organisation of the Islamic Countries (OIC) and other.

And now once again the influential fora of Pakhtoons are being disintegrated. And such observations of an Afghan nationalist could be confirmed through a confession made by a high Taliban leader Faiz Mohammad Faiz who is asking the global community to help them in eradication of foreign interference in Afghanistan.

Kabul refuses to import flour from Islamabad

By Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, June 29: Kabul has refused to import flour from Islamabad against hard cash, and has informed Islamabad that it will buy wheat only through its designated agents.

Kabul has also refused to accept the price which Islamabad has asked for the commodity.

A meeting was held here on Wednesday between the senior officials of the ministry of food, agriculture and livestock, foreign office and a delegation from Afghanistan.

The delegation is currently visiting Pakistan to finalize the arrangements for the import of 0.25 million tons of wheat.

Sources said the following matters had been discussed at the meeting: the quantity of wheat to be exported, export price and acceptable currency to cover the export of wheat to Afghanistan.

They added that Pakistan had agreed to export wheat instead of flour, as had been demanded by the Kabul government. But Pakistan authorities had made it clear to the Kabul government that wheat would be exported to Afghanistan at the "government to government" level and payment would be made in US dollars, they said.

The sources said the delegation from Afghanistan had expressed concern, saying that it would not be in a position to purchase wheat from Pakistan against US dollars. They added that later it had been agreed that the Afghan government would engage the services of private importers who would deposit money with the government of Pakistan and would be given allocated amounts of wheat.

The sources said the Afghan delegation had asked the Pakistan government to provide wheat against the rupee. But Islamabad had expressed its inability to do so, they said.

The sources added that the Afghan delegation had refused to buy wheat flour, saying that they needed only wheat because the imported wheat could be stored for a period of at least three years.

They said the delegation had been of the view that the milled wheat was more expensive from wheat, which they could use according to their own needs.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Flour Mills Association (Punjab chapter) has urged the Centre to lift a ban on the inter-provincial movement of wheat.

In a letter to the Centre, the

Association said the only solution to prevent wheat from going bad was to supply it to the provinces where it was required.

TURKMENISTAN: A Taliban delegation, headed by the chairman of the Afghan Chamber of Commerce, Maulvi Abdul Haleem Haleemi, is visiting Turkmenistan for talks on import of wheat to Afghanistan, adds NNI.

Maulvi Haleemi informed VoA that he had also held talks with a number of Afghans based in Turkmenistan and these Afghans had agreed to return to their country and continue their trade.

"We promised them that if they face any problem in Afghanistan we will solve it. They promised to come to Afghanistan and invest in the country. They also promised to send aid for the drought affected people of the country," he said.

"We have close trade relations with Turkmenistan because the country has opened two ports for us. We also have good trade relations with Iran and the Islam Qala route is open for trade," he noted.

He said Afghanistan was continuing exports of dry fruits and other commodities.

Taliban protest airspace violations

KABUL, June 1: Taliban have protested to the United Nations over the alleged violation of its airspace by Uzbekistan's jet fighters, officials said on Thursday.

In a letter to the UN, Kabul warned Uzbekistan against any further intrusions by its planes, Taliban Information Minister Qudratullah Jamal told reporters.

"We have informed the United Nations that they (Uzbekistan) should stop such acts and solve issues through negotiations," he said.

He said Uzbek jet fighters violated Afghan airspace twice on Tuesday and once on Wednesday in the northern region. He said each time a lone jet penetrated up to three kilometres (1.8 miles) into Afghan air space.

The Taliban air defence systems did not fire at the intruders because the militia, which holds most of Afghanistan, was "keen to maintain normal ties" with its neighbours, the minister said.

"We have, however, already announced that we would defend ourselves in the face of any attack," he said.

Taliban jets have been conducting manoeuvres over Kabul in the past two days.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said the protest letter was handed to the UN office in Islamabad.

The letter warns Uzbekistan of "serious consequences" if its planes carry out any fresh violations, it added.

UZBEKISTAN'S DENIAL: Uzbekistan on Thursday dismissed protests by Taliban that its military jets have repeatedly violated Afghan air space.

"We regard these reports as disinformation aimed at international public opinion," the Uzbek foreign ministry in Tashkent said.—AFP/DPA

DAWN

02 JUN 2000

NATION

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Taliban lodge protest with Uzbek embassy

ISLAMABAD (NNI)—Afghanistan ruling Taliban Thursday formally lodge protest with Uzbekistan over air space violation by Uzbek planes.

Afghan ambassador to Pakistan Maulvi Syed Mohammad Haqqani told a group of Islamabad-based Arab journalists that Uzbekistan's fighter planes violated Afghan air space on May 30th and May 31st.

Haqqani said that a protest note

was handed over to the Uzbek embassy in Islamabad, urging the Central Asian republic to halt violations of Afghan territory.

He said Taliban government has also complained to the United Nations of violation of Afghan air space by Uzbek planes.

He said Uzbek planes entered into Afghan air space up to one kilometre two times on May 30 and again on May 31.

Taliban to set up HR commission, says Mutawakkil

ISLAMABAD (NNI)—Afghanistan ruling Taliban say they intend to set up a commission which would respond to international criticism about human rights violations in Afghanistan.

Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmed Mutawakkil told the BBC Pashto service in an interview that there was no such commission in Afghanistan.

"There was unfounded criticism about the Islamic Emirate policies. So we plan to form the commission that will serve as a source for providing information about the human rights and will serve the Islamic Emirate," Mutawakkil said.

NATION

09 JUN 2000

Taliban flay ECO invitation to Rabbani

ISLAMABAD (NNI)—Afghanistan ruling Taliban Friday condemned invitation to the ousted Rabbani government in the ECO Summit meeting in Tehran and said "Afghan Islamic Emirate" would not be bound to accept any decision of the grouping.

"It is highly unfortunate that those people have been invited to represent Afghanistan, who even do not live in cities but have taken shelter in mountains," Afghan ambassador Maulvi Syed Muhammad Haqqani said.

Haqqani told NNI that Taliban control all big cities, including capital Kabul, all airports and government departments but they have been deprived of their right to represent Afghanistan.

"The ECO summit organisers should ask the ousted Afghan President as to how he will implement decisions of the Tehran summit when they have no existence in Afghanistan," he said.

NATION

10 JUN 2000

NATION

02 JUN 2000

Taliban protest to UN on airspace 'violation' by Uzbek jets

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia has protested to the United Nations over the alleged violation of its airspace by Uzbekistan's jet fighters, officials said Thursday.

In a letter to the UN, Kabul warned Uzbekistan against any further intrusions by its planes, Taliban Information Minister Quadratullah Jamal told reporters.

'We have informed the United Nations that they (Uzbekistan) should stop such acts and solve issues through negotiations,' Jamal

said.

He said that Uzbek jet fighters violated Afghan airspace twice on Tuesday and once on Wednesday in the northern region.

Jamal said each time a lone jet penetrated up to three kilometers (1.8 miles) into Afghan air space.

The Taliban air defence systems did not fire at the intruders because the Islamic militia, which holds most of Afghanistan, was 'keen to maintain normal ties' with its neighbours, the minister said.

'We have, however, already an-

nounced that we would defend ourselves in the face of any attack,' he said.

Taliban jets have been conducting manoeuvres over the Afghan capital Kabul in the past two days.

In Pakistan, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said the protest letter was handed to the UN office in Islamabad by the Taliban embassy.

The letter warns Uzbekistan of serious consequences if its planes carry out any fresh violations, the Pakistan-based private agency said.

AIP quoted Taliban sources as saying Uzbek jets entered Afghan airspace at Hairatan across the Amu river which forms the border between the two countries.

Uzbekistan, which is accused by the Islamic militia of aiding the Afghan opposition northern alliance, does not recognise Taliban rule in the war-torn country.

The protest comes in the wake of tension between the Taliban and Moscow after Russia earlier this month threatened air strikes against suspected training camps in Afghanistan for Chechen rebels.

Taliban authorities have repeatedly warned neighbouring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan — Moscow's key allies in Central Asia — against allowing Russia the use of their bases or airspace for any attacks on Afghanistan.

NATION 27 JUN 2000

'Afghanistan being victimised on drugs issue'

RAWALPINDI (Online) - Afghan Ambassador Syed Mohammad Haqqani has said his country was a victim of baseless propaganda from the West on the issue of drug manufacture and trafficking, adding Taliban had imposed curbs on poppy cultivation.

Talking to journalists at a function to observe 'International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking' here he said the Western countries instead of propagandising against Afghanistan should take steps to curb the desire of drugs in their countries.

He said concrete measures should be taken to block all passages of drugs smuggling to these countries.

In response to a query, he said, 'we have repeatedly told the United Nations to provide alternate earning means for people associated with poppy cultivation to combat this menace.

'No Afghan fighters in Chechnya'

ISLAMABAD, June 8: Afghanistan's Taliban regime has denied reports about the presence of Afghan fighters in Russian-controlled Chechnya and Dagestan, the Afghan

Islamic Press (AIP) agency said on Thursday.

AIP quoted the Taliban ambassador in Pakistan, Sayed Mohammad Haqqani, as saying that Afghan

Mujahideen had no bases there, as alleged, nor could reach there.

Haqqani said the allegation was meant to mislead the world public opinion.—DPA

DAWN

09 JUN 2000

DATELINE ISLAMABAD

M. Ziauddin

A sitting with the Afghan ambassador

THE other day I spent a couple of hours with the Afghan ambassador in Pakistan, Maulvi Sayed Mohammad Haqqani, and the Taliban government's permanent representative-designate to the UN, Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, who is visiting Islamabad these days. It was a refreshing experience for me for more than one reason. Mild-mannered and soft-spoken, both the gentlemen were humility personified. The topics which came up for discussion were not in any way sensational and the position taken by these two Afghan diplomats on these issues were not any different from the declared position of their government.

But to my pleasant surprise, there was neither the thick touch of doctrinaire in their answers, which one usually detects when talking to proponents of ideas challenging conventional wisdom and established international norms, nor was there any impatience on their part when fielding searching questions or responding to views that clashed with their known positions.

More refreshing was the fact that suddenly one felt that one could not only have direct access to the Afghan embassy in Islamabad but that one could also communicate directly with the Taliban representatives in Pakistan without the so-called local 'handlers' trying to stage-manage the event. One of the two other professional colleagues of mine who were also present at the meeting, particularly mentioned the need for easy and ready accessibility to the press while responding to Maulvi Haqqani's request for suggestions from the three guests on what to do to improve the image of the Taliban government which, in the opinion of the ambassador, has been tarnished by the propaganda of the Western media.

The youthful Maulvi Haqqani had a permanent smile on his face throughout the conversation. He said the Taliban government was not waging any war against the Northern Alliance, but it was the other way round. How do then they plan to restore peace to Afghanistan? Well, there is no need for us to wage a war. The commanders of the other side are defecting over to the Taliban side, and this would lead one day, soon, to permanent peace in our country. This defection process has caused panic in the camp of those outsiders who are helping the Northern Alliance. That is why the Russian threats to bomb the so-called training camps inside our country.

In fact, some of the Russian generals were also seen fighting against us recently

and on the side of the Northern Alliance, perhaps to bolster the sagging morale of the other side.

Why hasn't the Taliban government succeeded so far in winning recognition from its other neighbours? Well, they are under the influence of the Russians, and Moscow, therefore, has been able to manipulate them against our government. We are not in the business of exporting our ideology to our neighbours. But the perception, thanks to the Western media, persists. As long as there is turmoil in Afghanistan, the newly independent Central Asian countries will continue to be denied an alternative trade route and they will, therefore, continue to depend for their trade with outside world on the routes which go through Russia. This is in Russia's economic and diplomatic interest and, therefore, Moscow's desperation to keep our country in perpetual upheaval.

That the Taliban have an image problem is clear like the blue sky. That the major contributing factor in giving the Taliban this negative image is the ongoing civil war inside Afghanistan is also not in dispute. What, however, is missed by many is the fact that this very image of Taliban government is the biggest hurdle in the way of bringing the civil war to an end. War reinforces the image and the image fuels the war. Almost like a chicken-and-egg situation.

We did not have time to discuss in detail the contributions of Osama bin Laden's continued presence in Afghanistan or the establishment of the Chechen embassy in the country in compounding the image problems of the Taliban government. Also, we did not talk about the growing perception inside Pakistan that misguided groups within Pakistan drawing their distorted inspiration from the Taliban government in Kabul were contributing significantly to the local troubles, especially the sectarian troubles and partly also to the emerging social upheavals.

Responsible government leaders, both in the previous government and in the present one, have from time to time requested the Taliban government not to impart arms training to Pakistanis inside Afghanistan and which has served as an indirect endorsement of the perception of some that the Taliban government was somehow engaged in exporting its ideology to its own friend and helper of the last resort, Pakistan.

Abdul Hakeem Mujahid brushed aside, with total contempt, the recent reports of

attempts by King Zahir Shah to call a Loya Jirga. He said it was a non-starter as the members of the royal family itself and its supporters did not know what they wanted to achieve by staging this event. When asked for his comments on the recent public statement of the chief executive, Gen Pervez Musharraf, that Pakistan needs to be friendly with the Taliban government because it wants to be on the right side of the Pushoons, Mujahid sounded hurt and said this particular statement of the CE had caught the attention of the Afghans and they were discussing it at various forums, including on their radio. Mujahid insisted that the Taliban were not an ethnic group and rattled out the names of a number of ministers and governors who, he said, were not ethnic Pushtoons.

The two Afghan diplomats appeared genuinely worried at the devastation that has been wreaked by the widespread drought in their country. Already, agriculture, the mainstay of the economy of this 20 million-strong country was in a shambles because of long-drawn war. And now the agriculture production has dropped to zero and the cattle were dying by the hundreds every day making things totally unbearable.

Ambassador Haqqani, perhaps in order to spotlight the seriousness of the situation, related a harrowing story: A family which had decided to move from a drought-stricken locality but unable to take their children along decided to leave them behind. Before leaving, they sent the children to bed and placed a pot full of poisoned curd thinking that when they woke up next morning, the children would eat it and die. However, during the night a snake took its position near the pot, and the children when they woke up seeing the snake ran away without eating the curd. The neighbours killed the snake, threw the curd thinking that the snake might have contaminated it, took the children with them as they were also leaving the place in search of food, found the parents of the children at the next stop and handed them over.

More than the miracle which saved the children from certain death what horrified me was the fact that the drought is not only killing man and animal but it is also destroying the human soul itself. Dumbfounded as I was when the story came to its end, I could not but wish that those who want to bomb this country and those who want to put more sanctions on it, may, for a change, do some soul-searching on their own.

NATION 16 JUN 2000

Taliban slam US plan of more sanctions on Kabul

ISLAMABAD (NNI) – Taliban have condemned a reported move by the United States to impose more economic curbs on Afghanistan, asking Washington to stop using pressure tactics.

Afghan ambassador Maulvi Syed Muhammad Haqqani said Thursday that Taliban are calling for the settlement of disputes through dialogue but unfortunately Washington is pursuing the policy of sanctions.

Haqqani was reacting to a statement by the US Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering that Washington would have no other option but to impose more sanctions on the Taliban if the US concerns on terrorism were not addressed to.

The UN Security Council imposed US-sponsored economic and aviation sanctions on war-battered Afghanistan in October last year after Taliban refused to expel Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan.

"The United States ask other

countries to resolve difference through dialogue but it is itself acting contrary to its own policy and is bent upon using pressure tactics and policy of coercion in the case of Afghanistan," the Afghan ambassador said.

"We have held series of talks with the United States and are ready to continue the process to resolve all dispute peacefully," Haqqani insisted.

He said Afghan Islamic Emirate has floated various proposals to the United States to find out solution to problems, however, Washington has regrettably not positively responded to any of the proposal.

"The 20 years of war and the present worst drought have made lives of the people miserable and they need help.

But unfortunately the United States has launched fresh move to impose more sanctions on Afghans," he regretted.

Meanwhile, BBC reported that

Taliban authorities have closed a big camp at a time when Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar has arrived in Washington to discuss, besides other things, the issue of terrorism in Afghanistan.

According to the report, Riskhor camp, where Pakistan and Arab nationals were thought to be getting training has been closed.

However, there is no report about the fate of its previous dwellers.

A France-based expert of Afghan politics, Dr. Usman Taraki, commenting on Taliban decision said camps of some Islamic groups like Laskar-e-Jhangvi and Mujahid-al-Barq were reportedly present even when Taliban had not got control over the whole of Afghanistan.

He said western media reports used to say that these groups were supported by Bin Laden.

"If Taliban want to secure international credibility they would have to accept legal demands of the international community".

Kabul moves UN against Russia

ISLAMABAD, June 10: The head of the ruling Taliban movement's intelligence service complained on Saturday to the United Nations about Russian interference in Afghanistan.

Qari Ahmadullah said in a statement to a Pakistan-based news agency that Russia was attempting to bolster opposition leader Ahmad Shah Masood, who is holed up in his native Panjsher valley.

Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted him as saying in a letter to the United Nations Security Council that a series of defections by guerilla commanders from Masood's camp was causing concern in Russia.

Qari Ahmadullah denied Russian charges and Western intelligence reports that Chechen separatist Mujahideen were training on Afghan soil.

"We will not allow anyone use our land as a platform for aggression," AIP quoted him as saying.

Russia's Interfax news agency said on Saturday that the Taliban movement was massing men and arms in the north of the country in an apparent sign of plans to attack rebel-held areas.

The deployment was close to Afghanistan's border with ex-Soviet Uzbekistan.

Interfax said the Taliban militia had stationed up to 250 men as well as tanks and missiles at the river port of Khairaton, 15 km south of Uzbek border town Termez.

It said 12 tanks, 15 Stinger missile launchers, several wide-calibre machine guns, armoured troop carriers, and anti-aircraft guns had been deployed at

Khairaton, near a railway bridge connecting Afghanistan with the ex-Soviet Union.

The movement started about a week ago, Interfax said.

The agency suggested the Taliban might be planning to attack the northern rebel strongholds in Kunduz and Baglan.

The Taliban, which is not recognised as a government by the world community, has allowed a Chechen Mujahideen embassy in Kabul, to Moscow's intense anger.

Qari Ahmadullah warned of "dangerous consequences" if Russia was not stopped from interference in Afghanistan, adds dpa news agency.

He said if Russia was not stopped then "the region may once again slip into destruction."—Agencies

1,000 Afghans repatriate voluntarily

From Our Correspondent

KARACHI About 1000 Afghan nationals of 202 families were sent back home from Karachi on Thursday morning in 36 trucks. The repatriation was organized by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

The UNHCR representative in Pakistan, Hasim Utkan, bade farewell to the Afghan refugees at Haroon Bahria Township, Hub River close to the Balochistan border. These refugees will reach Kandhar via Quetta on Friday. These Afghan refugees were identified out of a very large Afghan refugee population residing in different areas of Karachi.

Talking to newsmen at the departure venue the UNHCR representative, Hasim Utkan said that these refugees have opted to go to their homeland at a time when

there is drought in Afghanistan. Plus the same situation is shared by Balochistan and Sindh. "However, they are prepared to meet the challenge," he said.

This repatriation operation coincided with the UNCH Tripartite Repatriation Commission meeting that was held in Islamabad and was attended among others by the Afghanistan Repatriation Minister. As such this meeting was considered symbolic by the UNHCR representative. Most of the Afghans that left on Thursday were in Pakistan for at least ten to fifteen years. Some of them came during the regime of the Soviet Union. "It is important that they retain their attachment with their land. Choice for these refugees is limited due to economic problems."

This is the seventh convoy sent

that two million refugees is the most frequently mentioned number. There are no estimates as to how many Afghan refugees are in Karachi, said the UNHCR representative.

The UNHCR target of repatriating 100,000 refugees from Pakistan will be achieved during this year. UNHCR emphasis is on voluntary repatriation. "We do not have the same profile we had 20 years ago," said the UNHCR representative.

He said that though 1000 refugees is a very small number, specially considering the fact that as many come here daily and many are born to refugees, he was happy that the movement is now gathering steam. Two weeks ago one operation was held and immediately another 1000 applied.

UNHCR has started concentrating on urban concentrations of refugees. Since 1990, 2.6 million Afghan refugees have been repatriated by UNHCR.

The UNHCR is facing certain constraints which are impeding repatriation objectives. The main constraint is of drought conditions in Balochistan and Sindh and in Afghanistan where local population and livestock have been affected. It has become difficult to meet the water requirements of both locals and refugees in Balochistan.

Each Afghan family on its arrival in Afghanistan will be given Rs 5000, three bags of wheat containing 100 kg each and some clothes at Kandhar, Helmand, Ghazni and Pul-e-Khumri assistance centres.

NATION 30 JUN 2000

Meeting reviews Afghans repatriation

ISLAMABAD (APP) - A meeting of "Tripartite Report Commission" (TRC) was held to review the repatriation programme of Afghan refugees from Pakistan to Afghanistan here on Thursday.

Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas, Abbas Sarfaraz Khan presided the meeting.

The meeting was informed that during the current year 32,000 Afghan refugees have repatriated to their home country while the target is 100,000 for the year 2000.

The meeting discussed the problems being faced by the Afghan refugees during repatriation in Afghanistan and suggested various measures to solve them.

The representative of UNHCR assured the meeting that the United Nations will continue to provide every possible assistance to the Afghan refugees for their respectable return.

The Afghan delegation, led by Maluvi Abdul Raqib, Minister for Repatriation and UNHCR representatives Guillermo Ditochi and Ahmad Said Sarah, senior officials of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, participated in the meeting.

Govt approves 18 housing schemes

The government has made arrangements for provision of loans to the people for 18 approved housing schemes, according to

current mark-up rate.

The loan would be made available through House Building Finance Corporation and other commercial banks to the people for 18 housing projects to be completed on commercial basis, Housing Ministry sources said.

He dispelled the impression that the previous government had withdrawn the mark-up on loans under Mera Ghar Scheme and it has been imposed by the present government.

Clarifying the position regarding mark-up, he said, as a matter of fact the previous government had never withdrawn mark up on loans for "Mera Ghar Scheme".

He added that the previous government had only decided to reduce the mark-up rate on the loans which were to be obtained for the scheme.

Shaukat leaves for Paris to attend UN Conference

Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz left here for Paris here Wednesday evening to attend a Conference on taxation system. Official sources said that the Minister during his tour abroad would inform the participants of the conference about the ongoing tax survey being carried out in Pakistan for the documentation of national economy.

The Minister will return home in the first week of July.

UNHCR helps in 245 families repatriation

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - The UNHCR wand districts. It added that the UN office has received a report from the people of Ghorja and Korogh districts in Herat province that their Karezes and springs have dried up. They are asking for assistance to save their livelihoods and same is the case with other areas.

According to UNHCR report, 1062 individuals have left for Afghanistan and they were being provided with the standard repatriation assistance package including cash, WFP wheat, tea and plastic sheets by the agency.

The report claimed that three children died of measles and some 150 were affected by various diseases in Bamiyan province. The reports said that mission to Badghis in May 2000 reported increasing stress among the local people and predicted decreased food security in the coming months, adding that seriously affected areas are Qala-i-nan, Sangi Atesh, Murghab, Qades and Jagi children.

Regarding the health, the report said that NGO solidarities reported to UNICEF in Kabul that there was an outbreak of measles in village Aqrubat and Gulistan of Bamiyan province. A team from UNICEF and the Ministry of Public Health went to the area to assess the situation, adding that three children died and 150 were affected due to diseases. An anti-measles campaign is being conducted in the surrounding villages for all children.

NATION

23 JUN 2000

NATION

30 JUN 2000

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The meeting discussed the problems being faced by the Afghan refugees during repatriation in Afghanistan and suggested various measures to solve them.

The representative of UNHCR assured the meeting that the United Nations will continue to provide every possible assistance to the Afghan refugees for their repatriation.

The Afghan High Commissioner, Malavi Abdul Razaq, Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas, Sarfaraz Khan and UNHCR representative Chikema Diroo, senior officials of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, participated in the meeting.

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current mark-up rate. The loan would be made available through House Building Finance Corporation and other commercial banks to the people for 18 housing projects to be completed on commercial basis. Housing Ministry sources said.

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UNHCR helps in 245 families repatriation

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — The UNHCR office has received a report from has assisted more than 245 families for repatriation from Pakistan to Afghanistan.

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The report claimed that three children died of measles and some 150 were affected by various diseases in Bamiyan province.

The reports said that mission to Badghis in May 2000 reported increasing stress among the local people and predicted decreased food security in the coming months, adding that seriously affected areas are Qala-i-nan, Sangi Atash, Murghab, Qadus and Jalandhar.

NATION

23 JUN 2000

NATION

30 JUN 2000

60,000 Afghans travelled on Pak passports

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Some fifty to sixty thousands Afghan nationals are residing in Saudi Arabia on Pakistani passports, Afghan charged 'affaires' Maulvi Abdul Wahab has said.

Maulvi Wahab told the BBC that there is no work-visa protocol between Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. Since, the previous government did not consider it necessary to send its people abroad and avail the opportunity, therefore some Afghans tried to arrive here on the

passports of other countries. He said Pakistan is hosting nearly 2.5 million Afghan refugees and a large number of Afghans have arrived here on Pakistani passports.

"Saudi government reached on agreement that those arriving on Pakistani passports can approach the Afghan embassy to get Afghan passport so that they could stay here with legal visa.

Nearly fifty to fifty five thousand Afghans have availed this

facility and changed their passports. Now they are working here as legal Afghans.

Saudi authorities have sounded last warning to the non-Saudi residents to legalise themselves or leave the country by July 3.

A senior official of the Saudi Home Ministry says that illegal migrants would undergo six months jail besides twenty six thousand dollars fine if they fail to prepare legal documents within two weeks.

China donates relief goods for Afghan refugees

PESHAWAR (APP) - The Government of Peoples' Republic of China has donated relief goods worth Rs 10.2 million for the Afghan Refugees living in NWFP.

The relief items consist of daily necessities, stationary and medicines, to be distributed amongst the Afghan Refugees in NWFP.

Goods were handed-over to the Afghan Commissionerate formally at a ceremony held at Azakhel, about twentyfive (25) kilometres from here Monday. Commercial Officer Embassy of China Mr Chen Chao, Additional Commissioner Afghan Refugees, NWFP Ghulam Nabi Khan and Col.(R) Altaf-ur-Rehman, SI (M) Medical consultant, Ministry of SAFRON were also present on the occasion.

Chen Chao, speaking on this occasion said that Chinese Government was keen to help the Afghan Refugees and assured that more financial assistance would be extended in future. Ghulam Nabi Khan, Additional Commissioner, Afghan Refugees Commissionerate thanked the Chinese government for providing assistance for the Afghan Refugees. Earlier Dr Imranzeb Khan, Commissioner Afghan Refugees briefed the Chinese delegation at his office regarding the role of Afghan Commissionerate and apprised them of matters pertaining to the affairs of Afghan Refugees in NWFP.

NATION

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27 JUN 2000

Rabbani asks CE to help end Afghan war

KABUL (AFP) - Ousted Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani has asked Pakistan's military ruler to convince the ruling Taliban militia to negotiate an end to the civil war here, opposition officials said Monday.

Senior opposition spokesman Abdullah said Rabbani met General Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of the Economic Cooperation Organization Summit in Teheran last week.

'Ustad (Rabbani) told Pervez Musharraf that there was no military solution to the Afghan issue,' Abdullah said. 'He told him also that the Afghan war has and will further affect Pakistan.'

He said Musharraf assured Rabbani that Pakistan wanted a peaceful settlement to the war. The Rabbani-led anti-Taliban groups accuse Pakistan of supporting the ruling militia which controls most of the country.

Rabbani still holds Afghanistan's seat at the United Nations as well as most Afghan missions overseas.

The Taliban are only recognized by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Rabbani also had talks with the Presidents of neighbouring Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan at the ECO summit.

The Taliban was not invited to the summit and strongly opposed Rabbani's participation, saying he had no right to represent Afghanistan.

The ECO groups Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and six Central Asian states.

NATION

13 JUN 2000

Harkat flays Russian threats

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The leader of Harkat-e-Inqilab-e-Islami, Maulvi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi has condemned Russian threats of attacking Taliban-controlled areas in Afghanistan.

"Russia should not sound such threats as it will yield negative result.

Moscow should use wisdom. If Russia ignited a fire, it will not remain confined to one point as its flames would spread across the region," Muhammadi told VOA in an interview.

He said that Russia will also face a serious international reaction and will burn in the flames it is now igniting. Russia should, therefore, not repeat its mistake.

He urged Moscow to hold talks with Taliban if it has some problem with them. Taliban are people of principles and justice and all the problems will be resolved if they are contacted.

He asked the Islamic world to come to the support of Taliban if Russia launches attack against Afghanistan.

NATION

03 JUN 2000

Rabbani to chair opposition meeting

DUSHANBE (AFP) - Afghanistan's ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani on Monday was to chair a top-level meeting in the north of the war-torn country, an opposition spokesman here told AFP.

The Afghan embassy in Dushanbe, which is loyal to Rabbani, said that the meeting would take place in a base of anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Masood, without giving further details for security reasons. The participants were to assess the military and political situation in the country, where opposition forces recently launched a counter offensive to neutralise gains by the ruling Taliban Islamic militia.

NATION

06 JUN 2000

NATION 03 JUN 2000

Afghans united against Russia: Hekmatyar

ISLAMABAD (APP) - Chief of the Hizb-e-Islami Afghanistan Gulbadin Hekmatyar has said that Afghans will defend every inch of their homeland unitedly in case of Russian aggression.

In an interview with Voice of America he said, "It is not important for us to think as to who is ruling Kabul. 'We will only consider the defence of our country's independence and sovereignty as our responsibility.'"

He called upon all Afghans to join hands to counter these threats.

He said, the Russians should know that by doing so they will be repeating their failed experience. Its consequences will be more serious than their previous defeat.

Hekmatyar said, Russian threats

are baseless and only excuse. There are neither any Chechen fighters in Afghanistan nor training camps for them. Afghanistan is not even close to the Chechen border.

He said Afghan groups which are encouraging Moscow for such attack and assured the Russians that the situation in Afghanistan is conducive for such an attack, are repeating the mistake of the Communists and their fate will be the same as of the communists.

Elaborating the Russian objectives behind these threats he said, the first thing is that President Putin wants to please the army and get its support as the army might welcome such a step may help it in regaining its lost honour in Afghanistan.

Hekmatyar terms 'Loya Jirga' an American plot

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Describing the 'Loya Jirga' (grand assembly) as an American conspiracy former Afghan Prime Minister and Chief of Hizb-e-Islami Engineer Hekmatyar said the United States is floating the idea to impose a puppet government on Afghans.

"The former Afghan king has assigned duty of convening the 'jirga' to those who have become foreigners and have forgotten their mother tongue," Hekmatyar told Radio Tehran in an interview.

He said those people are promoting the idea of 'Loya Jirga' did not take part in Afghan jihad against former Soviet Union and

had been living in Europe and US during the war. "They did not even know the problem of the Afghan people," he added.

The ex-Afghan premier demanded holding of elections in Afghanistan to determine the future leadership of the country.

"We want to ask organizers of the jirga how the Rome meeting's decision about will be implemented in Afghanistan. We ask them what are their objectives behind the move and what is their view about Communists and Russia". He said the Russian secret agency KGB had planned and brought Babrak Karmal and destroyed Afghanistan.

NATION 30 JUN 2000

NATION

06 JUN 2000

Taliban responsible for Russian threat: ANLF

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – Haji Saad Malook Shinwari, a leader of the Afghan National Liberation Front while expressing his concern over Russian threat to Afghanistan, has held Taliban responsible for it.

In a Press release issued here on Thursday, Haji Saad Malook Shinwari who belong to the border Nangarhar province of Afghanistan has said that Taliban who have been imposed by foreign forces are interpreting Islam to meet nefarious designs. Similarly, they just for the pleasure of their foreign masters have not only converted Afghanistan into a big prison house where its occupants are enjoying

peace and security but they are deprived of their basic rights and freedom of expression.

The Afghan elder has also denounced the external policies of Taliban, alleging that they have isolated to Afghanistan in the world. He was of the view that Taliban had failed to run affairs of war ravaged Afghanistan. He said they need to confess their failure and must let the peace mediators for transferring power to an interim government. He was of the firm belief that only through such steps, peace and stability can return in Afghanistan otherwise no one can stop Russian or any other state of

issuing threats.

Haji Saad Malook while denouncing the Russian threat to Afghanistan, has said that Russian defeat at hands of Afghans. He added that what ever may be the internal situation in Afghanistan but its people are determined to protect sovereignty and solidarity of their motherland. However, he said that Taliban have converted Afghanistan into a den of terrorist activities and narcotics. He called upon peace loving, patriotic and democratic minded Afghans to forge unity amongst their ranks for pulling Afghanistan and its people out of existing crises.

Mujaddedi warns Russia against attack

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – Former Afghan President and chief of the Afghan National Liberation Front Prof. Sibghat Ullah Mujaddadi, while expressing his concern over recent Russian threat to Afghanistan, has urged the Russia not to attack Afghanistan as all the Afghans are united to defend their motherland.

Prof. Sibghat Ullah Mujaddadi through a Press release has said, "the recent Russian threat of bombing Afghanistan is very strange, as it was bitterly defeated in the previous war. He said unfortunately the differences among the Afghans have given an opportunity to Russia to issue such statements."

"Had our brothers followed Almighty Allah rules today we would not have fallen victim to such threats.

Sibghat Ullah Mujaddadi who is residing in Denmark said, "Russians and other enemies of Afghanistan must remember and know that all Afghans are united against their enemies.

Meanwhile, a known religious figure and opposition leader Maulvi Fazal Hadi Shinwari while denouncing the Russian threat has said that Taliban and Mujahideen would jointly resist any attack against Afghanistan. He said that before thinking about new attack, the Russian must remember their past defeat.

NATION

01 JUN 2000

NIFA chief calls for durable solution of Afghan conflict

NATION 25 JUN 2000

PESHAWAR - Moderate Afghan leader and Chief of National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA) Pir Syed Ahmad Gillani Saturday held a detailed meeting and discussed in depth current situation of Afghanistan with the participants and apprised him of his stand on the efforts aimed at a negotiated solution to the conflict.

The meeting beside NIFA Central Committee members was also attended by leading Afghan technocrats, former diplomats, intellectuals, Ulema and tribal chiefs and it continued for around six hours.

The participants discussed various issues including the peace process according to Rome, Italy, Conference, ongoing confrontation between Taliban and Northern Alliance and others.

About the peace initiatives according to Rome Conference participants briefed the participants about the outcome of recent trips to United States of America whereas two different delegations held detailed talks with high ranking officials of America and United Nations.

Similarly, the participants were also briefed about the future scheduled of delegates to various foreign countries. In this regard, the participants also presented several proposals and suggestions with a view to materialise long-awaited dreams of war-affected Afghans who were badly affected in the last 22 years.

Similarly, the NIFA also focused its proceedings on increasing inter-ests of foreign countries and Islamic missions on current situation of Afghanistan, particularly on recent statement of the Canadian High Commissioner to Pakistan.

In this respect, the participants expressed satisfaction over a realisation of the global community approach towards the Afghan conflict, the would community could help return peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The meeting has also evolved a strategy to convince the Afghans, irrespective of any prejudice, initiatives aimed at building up a consensus amongst the Afghans about the future setup of their motherland as well as for an early reconciliation. In this connection, the NIFA stalwarts would arrange for such efforts to pave way for building up a consensus amongst the Afghans in favour of the traditional Jirga in their respective camps and other places. Purpose of such efforts is to pave way for the Afghans in favour of the traditional Jirga.

The NIFA stalwarts expressed resentment over the increasing hostilities and confrontation between Taliban and Northern Alliance and stated it is harmful to the interests of Afghanistan and its people.

The participants suggested lead-ers and policy-makers of the war-riving factions to refrain themselves from following such unrealistic policies and go for early reconciliation.

From Our Correspondent

Similarly, they urged both sides to include themselves in the mainstream of Afghan politics. Pir Syed Ahmad Gillani in his comprehensive speech on the occasion reaffirmed that NIFA would continue its neutral stand on the peace initiatives aimed at an early return of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

In this connection, he also reaffirmed his party's support to former King Mohammad Zahir Shah and his supporters who are sincerely struggling for resolving the Afghan conflict.

NATION 08 JUN 2000

UN seeks aid for drought victims in Afghanistan

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) - The United Nations appealed Tuesday for 67 million dollars in aid for victims of the worst drought to hit Afghanistan in 29 years.

Forty-eight million dollars is needed for food security, the acting UN coordinator for Afghanistan, Ahmad Farah, said in a statement issued in Islamabad.

Another 12.8 million dollars was required to protect livestock and crops from the effects of the drought, which had seriously affected all parts of the country, he said.

'Rain-fed crops in the north have failed almost completely, and preliminary estimates are that the cereal deficit may be as high as two million metric tonnes

compared to 1.1 million tonnes last year,' he added.

He recalled that Afghanistan requires between 4.0 and 4.5 million tonnes of cereals a year, and said that over the coming 12 months at least half of Afghanistan's 22 million people may be affected.

'Three to four million people may be severely affected and another eight to 12 million moderately affected,' he said.

The drought was the most severe in Afghanistan since 1971 and 'new assessments show that the situation is even more widespread than previously estimated,' he said.

Farah said 2.4 million dollars would be needed for drinking

water and sanitation in urban and rural areas and 2.7 million dollars for contingency planning.

Another 113,000 dollars was earmarked for preventive health 700,000 dollars was needed for co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation, he said.

Farah emphasised that any resumption of hostilities in Afghanistan may worsen the situation and result in further numbers of displaced people.

He recalled that donor countries had sent a message to the ruling Taliban Islamist movement and to its opponents in the north of the country, reminding them of their responsibilities to people in the areas under their control.

UN warns of food crisis in Afghanistan

By Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, June 9: Millions of Afghans face a serious food crisis due to severe drought that destroyed almost all the crops in the country, says a joint report of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The situation is expected to worsen in coming months, if additional food aid were not provided to the drought-hit areas, says the report released this week by the two organizations.

"This report is most alarming I have been involved with", said WFP Afghanistan director Mike Sackett.

Urgent assistance was "needed to provide seeds for the upcoming rain-fed wheat season and feed for livestock," the report said.

The report, prepared by a joint FAO-WFP mission that visited 17 Afghan provinces, said that rain-fed wheat and barley had almost totally failed, except in a few pockets. The irrigated cereal crops were down by 33 per cent.

The mission attributed production problems to a 70-90 per cent decline in precipitation this year.

It estimated a total cereal production for year 2000 at 1.82 million tons against a national need of over 4 million tons, down 44 per cent compared to last year and 53 per cent to 1998.

Afghanistan will need to import some 2.3 million tons of cereals, more than double the country needed last year, it said.

The WFP is mobilizing 225,000 tons of emergency food aid, which is almost three times the quantity distributed last year.

One million tons of cereals are to be imported commercially leaving a final food deficit of more than one million tons.

The agencies said millions of Afghans had little or no access to food through commercial markets, just as their access to food through self-production had been severely undermined by the drought.

The purchasing power of most Afghans has been seriously eroded by the absence of employment. About 85 per cent of

Afghanistan's 22 million people are directly dependent on agriculture.

Urgent assistance is also needed to provide seed for the upcoming season and feed for livestock. The agricultural infrastructure has been severely damaged due to war and irrigation facilities are in urgent need of rehabilitation requiring additional assistance, the report said.

WFP FOOD AID: Meanwhile the WFP will provide 105,000 tons of food aid through its regular operations to the drought-stricken people of Afghanistan from July after the reports that all the rivers and the canals had dried there. The WFP will also supply additional 120,000 tons of wheat to the those areas which have severely affected by the drought. The agency has also planned to assist digging of wells and installing tubewells.

AFP adds: The UN on Thursday made an emergency air drop of food to a stricken district of northern Afghanistan after reports of deaths from the drought gripping much of the country.

NATION 10 JUN 2000

World help sought for rights of Afghan women

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — Expressing her concern over increasing miseries of women from war-devastated Afghanistan, Ms Fatana Ishaq Gillani, President, Afghan Women Council, has urged the global community to play their role in this respect.

"Due to increasing interference in its affairs Afghanistan became an helm for its people," Fatana Gillani remarked while addressing a gathering of women at Aryana School, Hayatabad. The function was organised in connection with 6th installation ceremony of the Afghan Women Council.

Beside Fatana Gillani, a number of other AWC members delivered detailed speeches on the occasion and highlighted miseries of the Afghan women.

"Women are the first victim whether it was era of former communists and mujahideen or of present Taliban," Ms Gillani remarked. Elaborating her point of view, she recalled that when former Soviet Union invaded in Afghanistan, its regime had deprived mothers of their young sons and sent them to military camps for training.

Similarly, their adult sons, brothers, husbands, fathers and others had resisted just for the protection of their Islamic and Afghan identity. In such a confrontation some 1.5 million Afghans have been lost

their lives.

Later, when Mujahideen came into power, they adopted inhuman, immoral and unlawful policies towards the Afghan women. She added that when the Jehadic factions entered into strange-pulling for power and resources, their armed soldiers and commanders subjected helpless women to worst kind of brutalities.

In this respect, she diverted attentions towards frequent incidents of suicide committed by young Afghan girls both in and outside Afghanistan. And situation remain the same but even worsened when Taliban empowered in Kabul. She added that Taliban have not only confined the war-affected women to boundaries of their homes but even they deprived them of their basic rights like education, health and employment. As a result uncertain situation in their motherland the Afghan women are compelled to live amidst severe socio-economic miseries in all over the world.

The President of Afghan Women Council urged the world community particularly United Nations, Organisation of Islamic conference, European Union, 6+2, Pakistan, Iran and other countries to help Afghans in pulling their motherland out of existing crises.

She added that unless an end to every sort of foreign interference

and meddling in affairs of Afghanistan no one could ensure return of peace and stability in that country, therefore, all the world countries, forces and forums should contribute in an end to every sort of foreign interference in affairs of that country. She also urged the world to ensure protection to just and genuine rights of Afghan women in all over the world.

Reaffirming her council's support in favour of a negotiated solution to the long-awaited Afghan conflict, Fatana Gillani said, "I for the last 10 years have been demanding a negotiated solution to the conflict which is possible through convening a meeting of the traditional *Loya Jirga*." She added that it is a good omen that now majority of the Afghans from all over the country are being united in favour of such initiatives.

She assured former king Mohammad Zahir Shah of her council's whole-hearted support and was of the firm belief that he as well as his scattered supporters and followers would honour wishes and expectations of war affected Afghans who are desirous for peace and stability in their motherland.

About future line of action, Fatana Ishaq Gillani said that Afghan Women Council would continue its efforts for the protection of women's rights.

Afghan women for
centralised govt
in Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — Fatana Gillani, President of the Afghan Women Council while highlighting the miseries of the war-affected women of Afghanistan has called upon the world community to help the peace loving Afghans for establishment of a stable and protected government and assure the protection of their rights. Talking to *The Nation*, Fatana Gillani said that due to lack of a centralised, recognised and acceptable regime in Afghanistan its women are deprived of basic rights.

NATION

09 JUN 2000

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NATION

Afghanistan facing acute shortage of food, says UN

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD - Millions of Afghans are faced with a serious food crisis due to a severe drought that destroyed almost all the rain-fed crops in the country.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said here on Friday that without additional food aid, the situation was expected to worsen in the coming months.

A joint report released this week by the two Organizations said Afghanistan will need to import some 2.3 million tonnes of cereals this year, more than double the record amount the country needed last year.

Total production for 2000-01 is estimated to be of 1.8 million tonnes in the area, against a national need of just over four million tonnes.

Afghanistan may be able to commercially import one million tonnes, while WFP is trying to mobilize 225,000 tonnes of food aid, which is almost three times the quantity distributed in 1999.

However, this leaves a huge cereal gap of over one million tonnes. A deficit of this magnitude, if unmet, will inevitably result in

widespread serious nutritional consequences and loss of life.

In Afghanistan, rains normally start in October/November. Even if precipitation improves in the next season, wheat harvests will not be available until May/June 2001.

The joint report said if rains fail again, the situation, already of cata-

strophic dimensions, will worsen further and will likely make for a widespread famine unless adequate preventive steps are taken in time, the report warned.

Millions of Afghans have little or no access to food through commercial markets, just as their access to food through self-production has been severely undermined by drought.

The purchasing power of most Afghans has been seriously eroded by the absence of employment. About 85 per cent of Afghanistan's estimated 21.9 million people are directly dependent on agriculture.

The report said an urgent assistance is also needed to provide seed for the upcoming season and fodder for livestock.

The agricultural infrastructure has been severely damaged due to war and irrigation facilities are in urgent need of rehabilitation requiring additional assistance.

Out-migration of entire families has not yet been widely reported. It is reasonable to expect, however, that under the devastating conditions faced by households in some of the hardest hit areas many may have little choice this year but to move as a matter of survival.

Pak-Afghan talks on border dispute today

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan over border dispute will be held today, Afghan sources said Friday.

Officials from the Afghanistan Ministry of Frontier and Tribal Affairs and Survey of Pakistan will begin talks at the disputed area in Qamardin Karez, in Balochistan province.

Pakistan and Afghanistan were agreed last month to form a joint commission to discuss and resolve differences over border dispute in the area between Afghanistan Paktika province and Balochistan province.

NATION

70 JUN 2000

UN urged to stop foreign interference in Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – Major Usman Ziarnal, Secretary General of Afghan Social Democratic Party, has called for an early end to all sorts of foreign interference in the affairs of Afghanistan and suggested that Afghan conflict should be resolved through dialogue.

"Not only liberal minded Afghans but even religious groups accept this fact that foreign interference is the main cause of Afghanistan conflict," he said this while talking to *The Nation* on Tuesday. It is no more secret that Afghanistan has been devastated and destroyed due to such foreign interference and now it is the high time for UNO General Assembly to find out the solution.

Maj. Usman Ziarnal added that all those forces and countries who are meddling in affairs of Afghanistan are provoking Afghans against each others and financing them as well. In fact, through such steps, these foreign forces and countries are struggling to turn Afghans as their slaves, he added. He said the fact is that is foreign force can enslave the brave Afghans. In this respect, he drawn attention towards defeat of Russians in the near past.

The Afghan leader reminded

that for the last 22 years on the name of Socialism and Islam, a number of foreign countries and forces have engaged in a proxy war on the Afghanistan soil. This interference is to aim eliminate Afghanistan's historical identity and tradition. The Afghans have courageously foiled all such attempts. They rendered tremendous sacrifices for the protection of their land. He observed the persistent war in Afghanistan is quite dangerous for the entire region.

He quoted Allama Iqbal poem, which read, "Afghanistan is heart of Asia and when the heart is in trouble it affects the whole Asian region." In the light of such sayings of Allama Iqbal, the Afghan nationalist leader has urged people and government of Pakistan to help bringing peace in Afghanistan.

GNUI criticises Taliban view against Shah

Shehzada Masud, leader of the Great National United Islamic Front has expressed great concern over the remarks of Abdul Hakeem Mujahideen, Taliban representative to United Nations against former king Mohammad Zahir Shah. He said Zahir Shah can play important role for resolving the Afghan conflict.

In a Press statement issued here on Tuesday, Shehzada Masud has said that Afghanistan is a multinationalities country and all Afghans have the right to play their due role in the efforts for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan. He said that there is no justification to ignore former king as he enjoys tremendous support among the Afghans. He is also a symbol of Afghan unity.

Shehzada Masud observed that Abdul Hakeem Mujahid's views will not be a policy of Taliban but it could be his personal views. He said Zahir Shah and his supporters have no links with those who are engaged in fighting but are struggling for a negotiated solution to the conflict. In this respect, they oppose all sorts of foreign interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

Shehzada Masud has informed that peace plan of former Afghan king is being backed by all the Afghans. Majority of the Afghans are sick of war which has caused great destruction in their motherland. He added that such people are desirous to see peace in Afghanistan. He called upon Taliban leaders to realise importance of peace and tranquility in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan undergoing pauperization: Annan

By Our Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS, June 28: Afghanistan is in "acute crisis" and its people are living in "deplorable" conditions, says a report by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

He said Afghanistan was undergoing a "process of pauperization", made worse by the country's most severe drought in 30 years.

The report said a dialogue among the country's warring parties and an improved understanding among governments in the region were prerequisites to a resolution of the conflict.

"I add my voice, once again, to those international appeals to the warring factions and their supporters to stop the current belligerent course of action and return to the negotiating table,"

the UN chief said, after warning that a preparations were being made for a major offensive in the "near future".

Among a few "sparks of hope", Annan points to the good working relationship established by his personal representative for Afghanistan, Mr Francesc Vendrell, with the factions in Afghanistan and the country's neighbours, who have slowly been changing their approach.

"Governments in the region are beginning to realize that their national interests would best be served by the achievement of a peaceful settlement in that country rather than through the continued sponsoring of their favoured factions," Annan writes, commending the work of the Organization of the Islamic

Conference (OIC) in helping to bring about an agreement on the exchange of war prisoners. He notes, however, that the exchange is yet to occur, while deep mutual mistrust and reports of massive human rights violations persist, minimizing the effect of positive developments.

"What is now needed is for a process of dialogue to be structured among Afghans, while at the same time fostering a common understanding among those governments that are engaged in Afghanistan, based on the acknowledgment that their legitimate interests can best be guaranteed in the context of an overall peace settlement," Annan stressed.

Annan's critical report to the

General Assembly follows the inability of UN teams to negotiate a peace between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, led by Ahmad Shah Masood.

Children are dying from easily preventable diseases and women and girls continue to face serious restrictions on any participation in public life, Annan said in the report.

"The dismissal of female civil servants from government service is yet another sad example of the brazen violations of their rights," he wrote.

Annan also said there were strong indications "that a major offensive is being prepared for the near future" notwithstanding repeated appeals to stop the fighting.

He said his personal represen-

tative, Francesc Vendrell of Spain, had expressed in recent talks with senior Taliban officials and opposition leaders "deep concern at reports that both parties to the conflict are preparing for renewed large-scale fighting".

The UN chief said the presence of volunteers, mainly from religious schools in Pakistan, among Taliban fighters "is reported to be significant".

About Osama bin Laden, the Taliban suggested again that he be tried in a court in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia or any other Muslim country.

But they rejected calls for extradition of Osama, saying that he had been a leading participant in a jihad to expel occupiers, the report said.

DAWN

29 JUN 2000

UN must do more to end Afghan war, say CARs

DUSHANBE, June 14: Leaders of four of the five Central Asian states said on Wednesday that international organizations, including the United Nations, were not doing enough to end Afghanistan's civil war.

The resource-rich region, once part of the Soviet Union, has grown increasingly alarmed over the threat to stability from rebels who member states say are being trained on territory controlled by Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Islamic movement.

Central Asia is also crossed by a booming trade route for Afghan opium and heroin passing north to Russia and beyond.

The Taliban has denied that it either helps or turns a blind eye to the training of militants on its soil.

"We, the heads of four Central Asian states, signed an appeal to the international community, the U.N., OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference)," Uzbek President Islam Karimov said in the Tajik capital, Dushanbe.

"The gist is that we are not happy with the attention these international organisations are paying to the war in Afghanistan which has been going on for 20 years," he told a news briefing after a meeting of the Central Asian Economic Association.—Reuters

DAWN

15 JUN 2000

UN asks BD to trace 'Taliban accounts'

By Our Correspondent

DHAKA, June 13: Bangladesh's central bank on Monday directed all commercial banks to verify if any organization was operating accounts for the Taliban.

The Bangladesh Bank issued the order after the United Nations security council made a request following suspicion the Taliban were operating "in this region".

The council had asked Dhaka to rein in bodies suspected of providing monetary assistance to the Taliban.

The Taliban issue cropped up in Bangladesh during US President Bill Clinton's visit here in March when he cancelled visits to a national memorial near Dhaka and to a village fearing attacks from pro-Taliban groups.

The UN also accused several organizations in India of financially supporting the Taliban and asked the Bangladesh government to find out if any such group were operating in this country.

DAWN

14 JUN 2000

WFP urges Taliban to allow women to work

ISLAMABAD (NNI) — The World Food Programme has urged the United Nations and human friendly countries to intensify their efforts for restoration of peace in Afghanistan, and asked the ruling Taliban to allow women to work in its projects.

Manager WFP for Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Central Asian States, John Paul, says that the WFP has been providing wheat to the people in Afghanistan in lieu of work for years besides giving foods to the teachers in return for educating and teaching the children.

Paul said the women bakers' (Nanbai) programme in Kabul is useful as it has on the one hand provided job to a large number of women and men and, on the other, it has created opportunity to a large number of residents of Kabul to buy bread on cheaper rate.

He said that during talks with the Taliban, the WFP has convinced them to allow the women to work in the WFP survey into health and education field.

He said that nearly 900 women were allowed to take part in the survey.

The WFP official said that the Afghans and foreigners are working in six WFP offices in Afghanistan but the strength of the Afghans is almost nominal.

He said that largescale job opportunities be provided to the women in Afghanistan so that their life conditions could improve.

John Paul said the Afghans problems could be resolved only when the world launches development programmes besides humanitarian aid programmes in Afghanistan.

NATION

30 JUN 2000

NATION

29 JUN 2000

Foreign interference cause of Afghan crisis: Aman

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – Though majority of Afghans wish to stop foreign interference in affairs of Afghanistan which is the main hurdle for bringing peace in it but did not know the way for its end.

Known Afghan intellectual and chief of Afghan Committee for Peace and National Unity Dr. Aman Ullah Rasool before embarking on a detail visit to Europe, has expressed his concern over ongoing unrest, tension and crisis in his motherland.

No one is sure about return of peace and stability in war-devastated Afghanistan because of constant foreign interference. He called upon leading Afghan elders, tribal chieftains, technocrats, Ulama and Intellectuals to come forward and fulfil their responsibilities in this regard.

"Ongoing political and military

confrontation and hostilities is a matter of great concern. Those who are engaged in this confrontation didn't know its result." He added and said that responsibility rest with the neutral and impartial people to initiate efforts for durable peace.

Answering to a query, Dr. Aman Ullah Rasool said that it is true that almost of the Afghan factions are unhappy over the foreign interference but they themselves responsible for encouraging them to jump into the affairs of their motherland. Power is the main cause of increasing interference. He emphasised that war and force is not the solution of crisis.

Dr. Aman Ullah said that tolerance would help to resolve conflict. He said Taliban should find out a political solution to the conflict. Likewise, he added that

Northern Alliance should also follow policy of dialogue. All the groups must be taken into confidence for evolving a strategy for peace.

He recalled achievements and contribution of former Jihadist forces and said that Afghans are proud of defeating a super power.

He confirmed that majority of the Afghans favour convening a meeting of the Loya Jirga, which is a realistic approach towards solving of the matter. Personally, he believes that only a Loya Jirga can end internal differences, he remarked.

It doesn't mean that former king, Mohammad Zahir Shah intends to get power, was Dr. Aman Ullah Rasool reply in response to a query. He said Pakistan, Iran and other states have extended tremendous support and cooperation to them in the last 20 years.

UN warns Taliban of more sanctions

ISLAMABAD (NNI) – The United Nations Security Council is set to impose further sanctions on Taliban if they launch more offensive on their opponents, UN Secretary General's special envoy on Afghanistan, Francesc Vendrell said.

"I have told Taliban that in the case of a major offensive the Security Council might decide to impose further sanctions on them," Vendrell said in an interview with IRNA.

Asked to elaborate, the UN official said: "There are rumours that arms embargo, freeze of bank accounts of Taliban leaders and ban on entry visas to Taliban leadership may be imposed." However, he said, "it is early to think what the Security Council may do."

The UN official said there were signals that more offensives may be launched by the warring sides but warned that "little is to be gained from it".

"I certainly do not believe that a military offensive can succeed in resolving the problem in Afghanistan," he said. Vendrell said there will also be 'impacts (of these new sanctions) on some of the neighbouring countries in terms of obligations that they might be imposed upon them.' He said he also has raised the issue of Osama bin Laden with the Taliban leaders.

"Sanctions will remain on Taliban until Osama issue is satisfactorily settled. I encouraged Taliban to meet Security Council's demands so that the sanctions are lifted," he said.

NATION

29 JUN 2000

DAWN

09 JUN 2000

Sanctions on Kabul under study

WASHINGTON, June 8: The United States is talking to other UN security council members about tougher sanctions against the Taliban for their refusal to hand over Osama bin Laden, a US official said on Wednesday.

Preliminary talks are taking place at an informal level on the proposed sanctions, including an arms embargo, to boost the existing flight ban and financial freeze, the official said.

Efforts to persuade the Taliban to hand over Bin Laden, who has a five million dollars bounty on his head, and Russian threats to bomb them for training Chechen fighters, form a backdrop to talks that the official stressed were at very early stages.

Russian and US officials issued a joint statement after talks in Moscow on May 25-26

saying they shared serious concerns about support for "terrorism" by the Taliban.

"It was agreed that if Kandahar continued to ignore world opinion, this could lead to consideration by the United Nations security council of further actions," they said after the talks between Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov.

The US official declined to say whether a fuel embargo was being considered, adding that any steps would be aimed at the Taliban leadership, not the Afghan people.

The United States is also anxious to see that the existing sanctions, which came into effect on Nov 15 last year, are properly applied, he added.

"A number of things are being talked about, including an arms embargo," he said. "We are participating in discussions with others but it is not a US initiative at this point."

Russia, Canada, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Britain joined the United States in submitting the original UN resolution that gave the Taliban 30 days to hand over Bin Laden or have its assets frozen and flights barred.

Bin Laden has a 238-count indictment against him for US embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya that killed more than 200 people in 1998, and other anti-American attacks.

Witnesses said last month he moved between the Afghan provinces of Logar and Wardak.—Reuters

US donates \$ 4m, 40,000 metric tonnes of wheat for Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – The United States of America has donated 40,000 metric tons of wheat and 4 million US dollars for the drought affected areas of Afghanistan.

According to weekly report of United Nations Co-ordinators for Afghan Refugees, international and non-government organisations will use the drought relief funds in Afghanistan, on country-wide basis, for water and sanitation, health and nutrition, protection of livelihoods, logistics and coordination.

The report added that the United States is the largest single donor of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. Whereas the Japanese government has donated 1,200,000 US dollars for UNOCHA to support food distribution activities in collaboration

with WEF and an addition, 3,000,000 US dollars has been donated by World Food Programme for the purchase of food, the report claimed.

Regarding the mines action the report said that Mine dog groups (MDGs) of MDC have completed the clearance of a minefield in Noor Zai village, NahriSaraj district of Helmand province returning 19,367 Sqm of land back for agriculture production. They also cleared an area of 122,486 Sqm in Qalat centre, Zabul province which can now be used safely for grazing. The report added that both areas were cleared after requests from local people, adding that in order to reduce accident, injuries and deaths caused by mines and other explosive devices, a total of 2,474 persons received mines

awareness training in Kandahar, Urozgan and Zabul province and the training was conducted by OMAR and DAFA teams, the report claimed.

The UNCRA report contended that eighty five families (401 persons) were voluntarily repatriated from Pakistan to Kandahar during the reporting period, adding that fifty families return to Kandahar and 35 returned to Helmand provinces. The returnees received their standard repatriation-grant, consisting of cash, wheat and plastic sheets.

Ninety-three families returned to Spin blodak and 88 families returned to Lashkar gah, the report said, adding that they completed the construction of their houses using iron roofing beams provided by UNHCR.

NATION 30 JUN 2000

40,000 tons of US wheat arrives for Afghans

By Our Staff Reporter

DAWN 17 JUN 2000

KARACHI, June 15: US Ambassador to Pakistan William B Milam on Thursday received a shipment of 40,000 tons of American wheat at Port Qasim for the people of Afghanistan and handed it over to regional manager of the UN World Food Programme for Pakistan, West and Central Asia John Powell for onward distribution.

Sindh Minister Diwan Muhammad Yousuf Farooqui and US Consul General John C Bennett were also present.

This shipment, which landed at the port through US Flag carrier "Chesapeake Trader", was in addition to a recent US donation of \$500,000 in emergency drought relief besides 10,000 tons of wheat that the US donated earlier this year through the UN world food programme.

A further 45,000 tons is expected to arrive from the US in about 4 months.

The ambassador expressed concerns for the Afghan people hit by war, hunger and drought and noted in his remarks that "US is the largest single country provider of humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan which began during the decades of the 1980s when Afghanistan was occupied by a foreign power.

He expressed gratitude to the WFP and the Pakistan authorities for helping to facilitate the shipments and its distribution besides facilitating all previous shipments of wheat to Afghanistan during last many years.

He dispelled the rumours in a section of the press that the US had any vendetta against the people of Afghanistan. "In fact, he said, the regular support speaks very much to the contrary."

Before 1980, he pointed out that Afghan farmers grew enough food to feed the people of their country.

He recalled the Soviet invasion of 1979, the occupation of the country for 10 years and for the next 10 years the continuing civil war, which have devastated Afghanistan, almost beyond imagination, destroyed the Afghan economy and rendered the once self-reliant Afghan people incapable of feeding themselves.

He said the legacies of the occupation, freedom struggle and the ensuing civil war, including the laying of thousands of landmines, a growing reliance on opium poppy production in an economy that was perforce converted from subsistence to cash, the spawning of international terrorists, continue to exacerbate the toll on Afghan self-reliance.

Last year, the ambassador said, the US donated more than \$70 million in assistance to the Afghan people, this included 100,000 tons of wheat, contributions to the UN's demining activities, emergency relief following natural disasters, as well as health and education programmes for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and those returning to Afghanistan.

Pointing out that the worsening drought, which had affected parts of Pakistan as well. Unlike Pakistan, however, which has achieved a record wheat crop that would enable its authorities to alleviate the suffering from the drought in Sindh and Balochistan, Afghanistan's drought comes up on top of continuous food production deficits for two decades of war, devastation and impoverishment.

40,000 tonnes of US wheat for Afghanistan

KARACHI (NNI) - US Ambassador to Pakistan, William B. Milam was on hand at Port Qasim in Karachi on Thursday to receive a shipment of 40,000 tons of American wheat destined for the people of Afghanistan.

This single shipment is in addition to a recent American donation of \$500,000 in emergency drought relief and is in addition to the 10,000 tons of wheat that the US donated earlier this year through the UN World Food Programme, said a US Embassy press release on Thursday.

A further 45,000 tons is expected to arrive from the US in about four months.

The ambassador expressed ongoing American concerns for the plight of the Afghan people hit by war, hunger and drought and noted in his remarks that in 1999 the US donated 102,511 tons of food to the Afghan people through the WFP.

The US is the largest single-country provider of humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan. Last year, the US donated more than \$70 million in assistance to the Afghan people.

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US donates \$4m for Afghan drought relief

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The United States said Saturday it will donate up to four million dollars in emergency drought relief to Afghanistan, where some two million people could be facing starvation.

The US embassy in Islamabad said the money would be disbursed through international and non-governmental organisations to "relieve suffering" due to the worst drought in Afghanistan in 30 years.

State Department deputy spokesman Philip Reeker said US sanctions against the ruling Taliban fundamentalist militia in Afghanistan had no impact on the humanitarian effort.

"Existing sanctions against the Taliban have never banned hu-

manitarian assistance to the Afghan people," he said in the embassy statement.

Washington has imposed economic and financial sanctions on the Taliban after they refused to extradite suspected terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden for trial over the 1998 US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) warned on Friday that up to two million people in war-ravaged Afghanistan could starve in the coming months.

"Without aid, it is likely that famine will ensue and the spectre of mass deaths cannot be ruled out," UNHCR spokesman Ron Redmond said.

The UNHCR says it has re-

ports of groups of people wandering from village to village in a desperate attempt to find drinking water.

An UN appeal for 67 million dollars in aid was launched on June 6 but so far only 8.7 million dollars has been promised and only 200,000 dollars delivered.

In some parts of Afghanistan the harvest has failed completely because of a lack of rain. In other areas up to 35 per cent of the livestock has died, the UNHCR says.

The US embassy said another two million dollars in drought relief aid would be shared between India and Pakistan, which are also struggling to deal with bad droughts in Rajasthan, Sindh and Baluchistan.

US to slap more curbs on Taliban, says Pickering

ISLAMABAD (AP) - US Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering has said that Washington would have no other option but to impose more sanctions on the Taliban if the US concerns on terrorism were not addressed to member countries would seriously think to slap more curbs on the Taliban unless progress is made on the issue of terrorism.

Pickering told the VOA in an interview. The UN Security Council imposed US sponsored economic and aviation sanctions on Taliban in October last year after Osama bin Laden to hand over Osama bin

He said that Taliban refused to hand over Osama bin Laden to the United States. central point of his discussions with the Taliban during his recent visit to Islamabad. "We held discussions with the Taliban and they proposed some ways and means which they thought would be helpful for the solution of Osama bin

"We told them to use these ways and means but see how these are in conformity with the UN resolution", he said

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Crime on the rise along Iran-Afghanistan border

TEHRAN (AFP) - Crime, including kidnappings, is on the rise in Khorassan, an Iranian province along the border with Afghanistan and a major crossing-point in the international drug trade, residents say.

In the border village of Ali-Abad, four people were recently kidnapped, released only after their families paid 14,000 dollars to the hostage-takers from Afghanistan, said village resident Reza Gholami.

'Villagers who don't dare leave their homes after sundown are afraid of informing the security forces, who because of lack of resources are themselves afraid to go into the mountains and confront drug traffickers,' Gholami told AFP.

In another incident, the mutilated body of a six-year-old boy, Ismail, was recently found in a plastic bag in the courtyard of a house in the small border village of Ahmad Abad Salut, the daily newspaper Jomhuri Eslami reported Thursday.

The child's head had been cut, his legs and arms amputated up to

the knees and shoulders, and his stomach ripped open, the conservative newspaper said.

'According to a report by a pathologist, the child had first been violently struck on the head.

After that he was mutilated in one of the cemeteries near the village, where he had been found,' an official with the Torbat-e-Jam general court told the newspaper.

So far no link has been established between the boy's killing and the drug trade out of Afghanistan. Violence has increased in eastern Khorassan since the Taliban militia took control of Afghanistan in 1996.

According to the newspaper Ressalat, one 85-year-old man in a border village recently took advantage of a rare visit by President Mohammed Khatami to the region. The man gave Khatami a letter to let him know that four members of his family had been taken hostage by the Afghans.

Four days later, when the old man went to deliver the 5,000-dollar ransom, he himself was taken hostage.

Iran seeks world help for Afghanistan

TEHRAN, June 25: Iran, which has been trying to reduce its Afghan refugee population, called on Sunday for the international community to mobilize against drought and the spectre of famine in Afghanistan.

'The need to make firm, urgent decisions is greater than ever because all countries must prevent a human tragedy in Afghanistan,' foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said.

Iran's appeal to deal with 'the drought, the famine and their ill-fated consequences' in Afghanistan followed a warning by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees that the situation could trigger an exodus of Afghans to Iran and Pakistan.

The UNHCR on Friday called for the international community to organize aid for up to two million people in Afghanistan facing starvation, saying 'without aid, it is likely that famine will ensue and the spectre of mass deaths cannot be ruled out'.

The UNHCR says it has reports of groups of Afghans wandering from village to village in a desperate attempt to find drinking water.

In some parts of Afghanistan the harvest has failed completely because of a lack of rain. In other areas up to 35 per cent of the livestock has died, the UNHCR says.

The drought has forced the UNHCR to suspend its programme of helping Afghan refugees return from Pakistan and Iran to the parched southern Afghan provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Farah and Nimroz, the UNHCR added. —AFP

No military solution to Afghan issue, says Khatami

TEHRAN, June 11: Iranian President Mohammad Khatami on Sunday called on opposing Afghan factions to cooperate in setting up a broad-based government in Kabul, and rejected any 'military solution' to the conflict.

'There is no military solution to the Afghan conflict, and Iran supports peace efforts to put an end to the bloodbath in that country,' Mr. Khatami was quoted during a meeting with former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani, ousted by the Taliban militia in 1996.

The drought situation in Afghanistan was discussed during the meeting and Mr. Khatami made an appeal for increased assistance to the drought-stricken people of Afghanistan. Mr. Khatami also called on the international community to help the Afghan people. —AFP

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Dominique Girard meets Afghan leaders

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Dominique Girard, Under-secretary of Foreign Minister France during his two-day stay at Peshawar held detailed meetings with leading Afghan figures and exchanged with them views on current situation of Afghanistan as well as ways and means for return of peace in their country.

Dominique accompanied by his team members late Thursday night met with foreign Afghan foreign minister Hamid Karzai at Pearl Continental Hotel, Peshawar where their talks lasted for around two hours.

After meeting Hamid Karzai said that he briefed the French Under Secretary on current situation of Afghanistan as well as about Rome, Italy Conference. The French envoy listened to him and assured him of their support.

The French Under-Secretary for foreign affairs had also held detail talks with a number of other leading Afghans including representatives of various jihadist and military groups, intellectuals and others.

The French envoy is visiting the region with a purpose to hold talks with Afghans to apprise him of their proposals for resolving of the issue.

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NATION

Retired French general to meet Afghan Opp

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Retired French general and member of the European Parliament Philippe Morillon is to meet Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood in the Panshir valley soon, Afghan opposition sources said here Wednesday.

The general and several other European Parliamentarians arrived in the Tajik capital Dushanbe Wednesday. Morillon is to continue on to former defence minister Masood's headquarters in the Panshir, about 100 kilometres (60 miles) north of Kabul.

He will be representing European Parliament President Nicole Fontaine on the trip, which will be followed by another visit to meet leaders of the ruling Taliban regime which controls most of the war-ravaged country.

The hardline Islamic militia were furious at a visit to Afghanistan by former French ministers Alain Madelin and Brice Lalonde in September last year.

The Taliban captured Kabul in 1996 but are still fighting an alliance of resistance forces for full control of the country. They are recognised only by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

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Amnesty slams Pakistan for deporting Afghan teacher

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Amnesty International on Thursday expressed grave concern for an Afghan scholar deported from Pakistan last week and accused Islamabad of breaching its agreements with the United Nations.

'Amnesty International believes he was deported for exercising his right to freedom of opinion and expression,' it said in a statement. '(Mohammad Rahim) Elham's deportation is in breach of a recent agreement between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the government of Pakistan for joint assessment of Afghan refugee claims prior to deportation.'

Pakistan last week deported Elham, a former Kabul University professor, to Afghanistan without public explanation.

He had been working with Afghan refugees through a non-governmental organisation but reportedly fell out with his staff who accused him of advocating communism and spreading anti-Pakistan propaganda.

Taliban militia have said Elham would be safe as long as he respects Shariah law.

Amnesty said Pakistan had so far ignored a UNHCR request for an assessment of Elham's case.

'Over the past two years scores of prominent Afghans advocating an end to the (Afghan civil war) and an establishment of a government representing all ethnic groups have been detained by the Taliban and tortured,' London-based Amnesty said.

NATION 01 JUN 2000

Afghan opposition against Russian airstrikes

ISLAMABAD, May 31: Afghan opposition forces said on Wednesday that any Russian air strikes to punish the ruling Taliban for allegedly training Chechen rebels would not eliminate, what they called, "terrorist" activities.

A statement from forces loyal to commander Ahmed Shah Masood called for more UN pressure on the Islamic movement which controls 90 per cent of Afghanistan.

The opposition statement said any Russian air strikes against suspected Chechen training camps would be as ineffective as the 1998 US cruise missile strikes launched on alleged camps in southeastern Afghanistan, run by Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

Bin Laden, wanted by the United States on charges of masterminding attacks on two US

embassies in Africa earlier in 1998, was not hurt in the attacks and the Taliban have refused repeated US requests to expel him.

The statement said the UN Security Council should take "further" measures against the Taliban for harbouring bin Laden after last November's aviation and financial sanctions.

An opposition official said further pressure could be put on the Taliban by banning fuel exports to Afghanistan.

He said the opposition, ousted from power more than three years ago, was alarmed by the latest deterioration of the situation in and around Afghanistan.

Although Russian officials have issued warnings to the Taliban, they have been careful to rule out a repeat of the Soviet Union's disastrous war in Afghanistan.

AIR VIOLATION: Taliban said on Wednesday that planes from neighbouring Uzbekistan violated Afghan airspace three times in the last two days, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

Quoting unspecified Taliban sources, the report said the planes, the make of which was not known, took off from the town of Tirmiz.

It said two Uzbek aircraft twice intruded into Afghanistan's airspace along the Hairaton border area on Tuesday while one plane violated the airspace on Wednesday.

The planes were said to have intruded up to one kilometre inside Afghan territory. However, there was no report of bombings by the intruding planes.

The reports of airspace violations by Uzbekistan follow recent threats by Russia to carry

out pre-emptive strikes against bases in Afghanistan where it claims terrorist units are being trained for action in Chechnya and other parts of Russia.

Taliban's top leader, Mulla Mohammad Omar, has denied the claims.

Mujaddedi concerned: Former Afghan president and leader of the Afghan National Liberation Front (ANLF) Prof Sibghatullah Mujaddedi has condemned Russia for threatening to bomb Afghanistan.

In a press statement issued from Copenhagen, he said, "Threats to bomb Afghanistan are strange and Russia and its allies should learn a lesson from their previous intervention in our country."

Unfortunately, it was the division among Afghans which had provided them the opportunity to make such irresponsible state-

ments, he added.

Zahir Shah: Former Afghan monarch, Zahir Shah, has accused Chief Executive Gen Pervez Musharraf of creating rift among the Afghans.

In his statement, he criticized the remarks of Gen Musharraf that he had declared support to the Taliban, reports VOA.

He said different tribes and nationalities form the Afghan society and its status was well recognized inside and outside Afghanistan. Afghans were a united nation and could not be disintegrated, he added.

He condemned the efforts aimed at creating rift among the Afghans, terming it interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. "Such interference would create political and economic instability in Afghanistan," he added.

Agencies.

Masood says world ignoring Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Afghan opposition commander Ahmed Shah Masood has slammed the international community for indifferent attitude towards Afghanistan saying peace could not return to the war-shattered country until the world community stop 'foreign intervention'.

"There is no doubt that the international community has forgotten Afghanistan since a very long time. It is a pity. Our wish is to see the international community give priority to the restoration of peace in our country," Masood said.

He was talking to French members of Parliament, Jean-Michel Boucheron et Richard Cazenave, a member of the European Parliament (General Philippe Morillon), a Belgian Senator (Josy Dubie) and Bertrand Gallet who recently met Masood at Bozorak, in the Panjsher Valley.

"Peace in Afghanistan will only be possible if the international community exercises pressure in order to stop [foreign] interference.

To a question about the possibility of democracy in Afghanistan, Masood said that he has always stressed the fact that the only solution for Afghanistan is democracy through elections.

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Taliban to close down camps if any: Sattar

ISLAMABAD (NNI)—Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar has said the Taliban have assured Pakistan that they will close down training camps, if any, in Afghanistan for imparting training to Pakistanis.

"We are satisfied that the government of Afghanistan has informed us that they do not run any training camps and if there are any training camps, then they will take action to close those camps," the Foreign Minister said in an interview with IRNA in Islamabad.

"The Afghan government has promised to cooperate and we accept that promise and we look forward to implementation of that promise that if they discover any camps, they will close them," Sattar said. As a matter of policy the Afghan government does not encourage or support the existence of camps, which train foreigners for subversion against their own countries, he added.

He recalled that a number of foreign countries helped the arrival of foreign citizens to participate in the Afghan struggle against the erstwhile Soviet occupation. "According to a statement of former CIA station chief in Islamabad, published in the New Yorker of January 2000, the American CIA brought 25,000 foreigners to fight along with the Afghan volunteers for the independence of

their country". How many of them went back, how many of them are still in the area, he questioned.

"These people came with a certain mission that mission is over but they have not gone back. We have received representations from Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Uzbekistan that some of their nationals are still located either in Pakistan or in Afghanistan and that they engage in unacceptable activities directed against the governments of these countries".

Pakistan, he said, has no desire whatsoever to permit the use of its territory for activities harmful to

the peace and stability of the brotherly countries adding, "we are trying to locate these people". Pakistan, he said, has extradited them in the past whenever they were found. Sattar said everyone should understand the environment in Afghanistan. "If there are foreigners, we should not jump to the conclusion that they have been brought there or being encouraged by the Afghan government.

What we are trying to do is to see the continued cooperation and assistance of the Afghan government in locating proclaimed Pakistani offenders".

NATION 06 JUN 2000

NATION 04 JUN 2000

US bent upon harming Taliban govt in name of Osama: Fazl

DARYA KHAN (Online) — Leader of Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam Maulana Fazlur Rahman has said the United States is bent upon harming the Islamic government of Afghanistan in the name of Osama.

Addressing a press conference in Madrasa-e-Farooqia here Saturday, Maulana Fazlur Rahman said the actions against the religious institutions should be strongly protested.

The JUI chief said the religious institutions were not parting training to the terrorists. He added that the government, in order to wipe out such apprehensions, should conduct a survey of these institutions.

He however warned that any action taken against the religious

institutions to please the Western powers, would be strongly resisted.

Commenting on the ongoing accountability process in the country, he said the accountability process undertaken by the previous and current governments was not appropriate. A separate department should be set up, which would continue its functioning in all regimes under any circumstances, he suggested. He said the accountability process could only be successful if it was performed impartially without discriminating between the rich and poor.

He said the present accountability process would not yield good results.

Maulana Fazlur Rahman said the US, which portrayed itself to be

the preacher of peace, was the biggest terrorist on the face of this earth. He said that by magnifying the issue of Osama Bin Laden, the US had been damaging the Islamic government of Taliban.

The Jamiat leader said in order to put the country on the right track, the whole system needed to be changed rather than just changing the faces. He said the Britain ruled the Subcontinent for a century and a half and for the last 52 years, the successors to the British rulers had been ruling the country. These people were the biggest hurdle in the way of Islam, he said.

Maulana Fazlur Rahman said the murder of Maulana Yousaf Ludhiani was a clear-cut proof of the failure of present government.

Peace must for prosperous Afghanistan, says Khattak

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Ajmal Khattak, chief of the newly formed National Awami Party Pakistan while advocating in favour of peace and stability in Afghanistan said, "peace is essential for progress, prosperity and stability in Afghanistan."

"No one can resolve issues through guns and bullets but they should be resolved through talks," Ajmal Khattak remarked while addressing a gathering of NAP Pakistan at Kocha Resalder Peshawar city.

Beside Ajmal Khattak, the function was also addressed by a number of other people who announced joining of the NAPP.

Referring to situation inside Afghanistan, Ajmal Khattak stated it is harmful not only to Afghanistan but also to Pakistan.

He said that due to uncertain situation inside Afghanistan, peo-

ple from all over Pakistan are facing severe problems, therefore, return of peace and stability is more essential for Pakistan. In this respect, he supported the idea for a negotiated solution to the conflict and asked for an end to fighting.

Ajmal Khattak added that in the last two decades Pakistan has established its influence in Afghanistan and its rulers are playing a key role in a political matter of the country.

He urged the rulers to revise Afghanistan policy and instead of supporting its favourites, attention must be concentrated on transfer of power to an acceptable and neutral government.

He was of the firm belief that only through such steps, peace and stability could returned in Afghanistan.

If peace comes Afghan refugees would go back.

Ajmal Khattak pressed for establishment of a tension-free atmosphere in the region.

In this connection, he urged rulers from both Islamabad and New Delhi to refrain themselves of further confrontation and instead of it must enter into direct negotiations with each others.

He was of the firm belief that with resolving of all disputes between India and Pakistan, poverty-hit people from both the countries could get a relief.

Advocating in favour of his national reconciliation programme, Ajmal Khattak said that the country is passing through a crucial stage of its history.

He added that increasing rifts amongst rulers, politicians and religious scholars may harm the country.

He said that it is need of the hour to forge unity for better future.

Ajmal Khattak said, "Pakistan is for Pakhtoons and without Pakhtoons, Pakistan can not survive."

He added that with formation of NAP Pakistan he is struggling to assemble the down trodden and oppressed communities.

He was of the firm belief that NAP Pakistan would prove itself a forum for oppressed and ignored communities.

Levelling serious allegations against ANP leaders, Ajmal Khattak questioned their contribution for Pakhtoons in the last 50 years.

"They must shut their mouths otherwise I will expose their real faces before the Pakhtoons," Ajmal Khattak remarked in a sentimental tone.

He added that due to their unrealistic and self-interested policies, the ANP has disappointed the party workers.

NATION 19 JUN 2000

Taliban in sinking boat: Wali Khan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Renowned politician and Member of Awami National Party (ANP) Khan Abdul Wali Khan has apprehended a tug of war in Afghanistan as according to him, the Taliban are now boarding a sinking boat.

Wali Khan said that now all terrorist camps in Afghanistan could be disbanded. Similarly, he said that besides Taliban, the Kashmir issue is nearing its solution. However, Wali Khan did not explain the point.

Answering a question, Wali Khan held the Mullahs responsible for bloodshed and destruction in Afghanistan.

Wali Khan reminded that when the former Soviet Union and the United States of America made Afghanistan a battlefield for their nefarious designs, they were the first who opposed it.

"At that time we had not only opposed the idea of Afghan Jihad but even dubbed it a war between two super powers, but unfortunately we were declared enemies of Islam and Pakistan. Now a majority of the people have realised that our stand was a realistic one", he said.

Wali Khan said that now when the United States is out of trouble, it has stopped extending financial and political support to Mullah's.

Taliban urged not to extradite Osama

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Provincial General Secretary of Jamiat-e-Islami, Siraj-ul-Haq has said that the Saudi national Osama Ben Laden should not be handed over to United States of America and urged for America to it wants to control the entire world.

According to a statement issued here, he said this in a meeting with the acting Governor of Nangarhar province of Afghanistan, Molvi Sadar Azam, during two days visit to Afghanistan.

The delegation consists of Abdur Raouf Shinwari, Zar Noor Afridi, Masjidir Shah and Haleeq-ur-Rahman. The delegation discussed the matters of mutual interest with the Afghan's Governor including the relation of countries and implementation of Islamic rule in Afghanistan.

The JI General Secretary said that the people of Pakistan wanted peace and prosperity in Afghanistan.

ist, but the America wants to destroy the peace of the country. He vowed that Osama Ben Laden should not be handed over to United States of America and urged for unity.

The Afghan's Governor in response, offered thanks to the JI General Secretary and said that the Pakistan had helped Afghanistan in 20 years war against the then USSR.

He added that they want to bring prosperity and happiness to the war affected Afghanistan. He said their doors always opened for talib talks with the opponents. He declared that Osama was their guest, adding that they would provide protection to Osama against enemies. He said that the US wants to attack on Afghanistan by declaring Osama as terrorist. He said that however, the US cannot succeed.

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NATION 06 JUN 2000

Pakistan expels Afghan Professor Rahim Alham

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR— Professor Mohammad Rahim Alham, an Afghan national associated with an international Non-Government Organisation, has been expelled from Pakistan on charges of preaching communism and propagating in favour of Pakhtoonistan.

Prof. Mohammad Rahim Alham, former Dean Faculty of Literature and Languages, University of Kabul, after migrating from Afghanistan had joined an NGO with its headquarter in Germany.

The NGO is contributing to promotion of basic and primary education amongst the Afghan refugees staying in Pakistan. Prof. Rahim Alham is associated with the NGO as Coordinator.

Some highly placed sources informed *The Nation* that recently some Pakistani and Afghan nationals had made a complaint against Prof. Rahim Alham accusing him of preaching communism in the primary schools. Similarly,

he was charged with advocating Pakhtoonistan.

The complaint was not only brought into notice of the authorities concerned but it was also issued to the Press. In the light of the complaint, Prof. Rahim Alham was extradited to Afghanistan on Tuesday last.

It has come to the knowledge that Prof. Rahim Alham had complained against misuse of vehicles and other properties of the NGO which had led to the sacking of a number of Pakistani and Afghan nationals. And in retaliation, the sacked employees lodged a complaint against Prof. Rahim Alham.

Prof. Rahim Alham is one of those Afghan nationals who have been expelled from Pakistan under different charges. Earlier, ex-Nangarhar Governor Haji Abdul Qadeer Khan, his aide Haji Mohammad Zaman and several others were expelled on the complaints of the Taliban leaders.

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JI urges Taliban not to extradite Osama

ISLAMABAD (NNI)—Jamaat-i-Islami has urged Afghanistan's Taliban not to hand over Saudi national Osama bin Laden to the United States or any other country.

The demand was made by Jamaat-i-Islami provincial Secretary General Sirajul Haq in a meeting with the acting Governor of Eastern Afghan province of Nangarhar Maulvi Sadr-e-Azam during his three-day visit to the war-ravaged Afghanistan, reports Radio Tehran.

Sirajul Haq assured every kind of help and support to the Taliban on behalf of the Jamaat. The Jamaat delegation pledged strong support to the Taliban on Osama bin Laden's issue and urged Taliban not to hand him over to the United States or any other country. However, it did not elaborate how the Jamaat can help in case of a possible at-

tack or imposition of economic sanctions on Afghanistan.

The radio said that apart from Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Maulana Samiul Haq, the Jamaat-i-Islami led by Qazi Hussain Ahmed has also got closer to Afghanistan's Taliban.

Quoting the Afghan opposition forces, the radio said that thousands of fresh forces from Pakistan have joined Taliban amidst reports of the arrival of the chief of eastern zone of Afghanistan and the Governor of Nangarhar province, Haji Qadeer in Peshawar on an unofficial visit.

The radio said that Qadeer also visited the pro-Taliban Darul Uloom-e-Haqqania in Akora Khattak. Besides, Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam factions, the Jamaat-e-Islami has also strengthened relations with Taliban.

Afghan professor expelled

PESHAWAR, June 23: The NWFP government has expelled a former Afghan professor, associated with a German non-governmental organization (NGO) declaring him 'persona non grata', it was reported on Friday.

The academic, Prof Mohammed Rahim Elham, was expelled to Afghanistan via Torkham border.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said that the professor, who had remained an academic at Kabul University, was currently working for the Basic Education for Afghan Refugees (BEFAR).—DPA

NATION 24 JUN 2000

DAWN

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Stocks worth Rs35bn to be shifted to mills

Kabul to get flour instead of wheat

By Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, June 24: The government has decided to supply flour to Afghanistan instead of ungrinded wheat.

The decision had been taken to save the procured wheat crop worth Rs35 billion lying in the open in the Punjab province, as monsoon rains was expected next month, sources told *Dawn* here on Saturday.

They said the Chief Executive, Gen Perviz Musharraf, had asked the agriculture ministry to submit details of flour supply to Afghanistan.

The Punjab food department, they said, would supply the entire wheat stock to the flour mills for grinding and then it would be exported to the war-torn and drought-stricken country.

They added the federal government had started negotiations with the Kabul authorities for the export of the flour "at government-to-government level."

They maintained that both the countries were expected to

determine the quantity of the commodity, the export price and acceptable currency to cover the consignment.

Earlier the concerned quarters had told the federal government that the faulty procurement campaign launched by the Punjab food department, inadequate storage arrangements, and expenditures incurred on wheat storage/transportation, were the main causes of irritation among the authorities and could tarnish the image of the government, they said.

They added the bumper wheat crop as a matter of fact should have been taken as God's gift for the whole country and the ban on the inter-provincial movement of the commodity should have been lifted.

It was also told that the government was spending billions of rupees to safeguard the interest of the farmers, but due to insufficient storage facilities and lack of godowns, these efforts would not produce the

desired results.

They said to save the wheat stock from damage the government was planning to provide the flour to the deficit provinces after the procurement of six million tons of wheat.

They said the government was told that the best solution to overcome this situation was to supply the surplus wheat to Afghanistan.

It was also told that the Punjab had much surplus milling capacity and this could be properly utilized for sending atta to the other provinces.

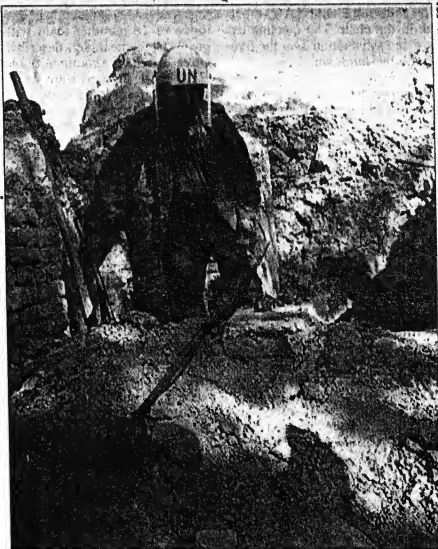
US DONATION: The United States said on Saturday it will donate up to four million dollars in emergency drought relief to Afghanistan, where some two million people could be facing starvation adds AFP.

The US embassy in Islamabad said the money would be disbursed through international and non-governmental organisations to "relieve suffering" due to the worst drought in Afghanistan in 30 years.

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KANDAHAR: A "De-Miner" in Minefield 179 coming out of the small hole he has been working in for the past few weeks.—AFP



TEHRAN: Burhanuddin Rabbani meets supreme leader Ali Khamenei.—AFP

NATION

12 JUN 2000



KARACHI: Afghan refugees boarding a truck here on way home on Thursday. —Dawn

DAWN 30 JUN 2000

NATION 30 JUN 2000

Taliban attack imminent: Opp

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia will unleash a major attack north of here within days, a senior spokesman for the opposition forces said Thursday.

Abdullah, a spokesman for key opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, told AFP the Taliban would charge their positions in the northern provinces of Parwan and Kapisa either Thursday night or Friday.

'Their last preparations are complete. They will stage their offensive shortly,' he said, speaking from Geneva.

He alleged that a 5,000-strong Taliban army backed by 2,500 Pakistanis and 800 Arabs would take part in the attack against Masood's forces entrenched in the Panjshir valley about 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of Kabul.

'We have reports from inside the Taliban that Pakistan is directly involved in the attack,' he said.

He said that among the Pakistanis were regular soldiers and vol-

unteers from the Koranic schools in Pakistan.

Pakistani officials contacted in Islamabad immediately denied the allegations.

Abdullah said UN Secretary General Kofi Annan would be asked to convince the Taliban Islamic militia not to go ahead with the planned offensive.

'The attack will entail another humanitarian crisis,' he said, adding that the UN should at least condemn it if not stop it.

Taliban Information Minister Qudratullah Jamal denied the opposition spokesman's claims, saying there were no preparations for an attack.

He said the militia did not need Islamabad's backing as it held most of the country and enjoyed popular support.

'The people are now with us. We control 90 per cent of the land and thus there is no need for Pakistanis and Arabs,' he said.

'There are no preparations for the moment ... It is easier to solve the issues through understanding.'

Kabul residents said Taliban military aircraft had flown thousands of fighters to the northern city of Kunduz, bordering the Masood-held province of Takhar, earlier in the week, only to return with the troops hours later.

Taliban soldiers in full combat gear have been seen driving around the city in recent days, with their trademark Japanese pick-ups piled with automatic arms, quilts and other supplies.

The fundamentalist militia, which came from obscurity in 1994 and seized Kabul in 1996, now control most of the country but have been unable to defeat forces loyal to ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Taliban Deputy Information Minister Abdurrahman Hotak said Russian, Indian, Iranian and unspecified western advisers were working with Masood. 'Eyewitnesses say that there are a number of military advisers frequenting those areas, giving them advice and assistance in their current military programmes,' he said.

Masood says Taliban may launch attack

KABUL, June 25: Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood believes that the Taliban are planning a new offensive in northern Afghanistan and has conveyed his fears to the United Nations, Masood's spokesman said on Sunday.

Masood met the UN Secretary General's special envoy, Francis Vandreille, in the capital of Dushanbe, in the north, and told him the Taliban attack was imminent, in the Taliban spokesman said.

'It was conveyed seriously to Vandreille that the Taliban were preparing for an attack in line with their policy of domination of fighting,' Anwari said.

Anwari, who attended the Dushanbe meeting, said the Taliban had discussed the situation of ending the fighting and speeding up the exchange of prisoners of war (POWs) between the warring factions. He said the opposition leader told the UN envoy that he was in a defensive position because of interest in Afghan peace.

However, Anwari said opposition fighters were on high alert against a possible Taliban attack.

No comment was immediately available from the Taliban. Sources in Kabul said they had noticed an increase in the movement of military personnel and equipment, indicating the possibility of a renewed round of summer fighting—AFP

DAWN

26 JUN 2000

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Taliban take positions on Uzbekistan border

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Thousands of armed Taliban have taken positions in Hairatan bordering Uzbekistan in the wake of possible Russian airstrike from Uzbekistan.

The Peshawar-based Pushto daily *Wahdat* Wednesday reported that Taliban fighters and Afghan armed forces have been put on alert.

The paper said that Taliban have also deployed missiles and heavy weapons on the hilltops to meet any eventuality after frequent threats from Moscow to target alleged terrorist training camps in the war-torn country. Senior Taliban officials earlier warned Uzbekistan and Tajikistan not to allow their territory

for attack on Afghanistan. They threatened that any such attack would have dire consequences.

Reports from Afghanistan speak of hectic military maneuvering in Hairatan.

A large number of armed Taliban are arriving in Hairatan to meet any eventuality.

A prominent commander of Taliban Mulla Fazal Akhund along with his armed men has also reportedly arrived in Hairatan to strengthen the Taliban forces.

The Taliban Defence Ministry has convened the meeting of key military commanders to discuss the military strategy.

Taliban put fighters on alert near Uzbekistan

KABUL, June 5: Taliban fighters have been put on alert along the border with Uzbekistan after Uzbek jets allegedly violated Afghan air space last week, the Afghan information minister said on Monday.

Qudratullah Jamal also said Taliban war planes were on alert but denied reports that thousands of Taliban reinforcements had been dispatched to the border town of Hairatan.

"We have not reinforced the Islamic army personnel who are based there. They are there and they are on alert," he said.

Unconfirmed reports here earlier said the Taliban had deployed anti-aircraft missiles including US-made Stingers close to the Uzbek border.

Hairatan, in the northern Afghan province of Balkh, faces Uzbekistan's Termez port across the Oxus River.

The Taliban last week protested to the United Nations over the alleged violation of Afghanistan's air space.

Jamal said Taliban fighters were also put on alert after Russia late last month threatened to stage air strikes.—AFP

DAWN 06 JUN 2000

Taliban blame opposition for breach of ceasefire

ISLAMABAD, June 4: The Taliban government on Sunday accused opposition guerillas of launching two attacks near Kabul during a ceasefire called by both sides to allow a UN-backed vaccination drive against polio.

A Taliban spokesman accused opposition fighters of attacking positions held by the Taliban north of Kabul in Parwan and Gorband provinces.

The spokesman told Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) that both attacks had been repelled and said the Taliban would continue to honour the ceasefire to allow the immunisation to take place.

Tens of thousands of volunteers have been deployed all over the broken central Asian state for a two-day attempt to inoculate 4.5 million children against polio.

It is the second of four country-wide campaigns to immunise all Afghan children. The first was in May and the final two will be in October and November.

UN officials said bicycles were being used to transport the volunteers in urban areas while donkeys carrying vaccine packed in ice are being employed in several mountain ranges.—Reuters

05 JUN 2000

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Taliban fighters put on alert along Uzbek border

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban fighters have been put on alert along the border with Uzbekistan after Uzbek jets allegedly violated Afghan air space last week, the Taliban information minister said Monday.

Qudratullah Jamal also said Taliban war planes were on alert but denied reports that thousands of Taliban reinforcements had been despatched to the border town of Hairatan.

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Hairatan, in the northern Afghan province of Balkh, faces Uzbekistan's Termez port across the Oxus River.

The Taliban last week said it had protested to the United Nations

over the alleged violation of its air space.

Jamal said Taliban fighters were also put on alert after Russia late last month threatened to stage air strikes against suspected terrorist camps in Afghanistan.

The minister reiterated there were no camps in Afghanistan to train Muslim militants from Chechnya, Uzbekistan or Tajikistan.

Tashkent has already dismissed Taliban claims that its jets last week entered Afghan air space up to to three kilometers (1.8 miles) over Hairatan.

Uzbekistan, which is accused by the Islamic militia of aiding the Afghan opposition northern alliance, does not recognise Taliban rule in the war-torn country.

The Taliban, which seized Kabul in 1996, controls most of Afghanistan except for some provinces in the northeast and is recognised only by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan.

Four die as Afghans, tribesmen clash

WANA (South Waziristan), June 12: Four people were killed in a clash between an Afghan refugee family and local tribesmen near the border town of Wana, the capital of South Waziristan agency, in the North Western Frontier Province on Monday morning, officials said.

The clash took place when an Afghan refugee, Din Muhammad Shinwari, killed his tribal namesake for unknown reasons. After the killing of Din Muhammad, a taxi driver by profession, the cousin of the deceased, Khajan, went to the Afghan refugee camp to bring the body and he too was gunned down.

Later, local Ahmadzai Wazir tribe surrounded the house of the alleged murderer. The angry tribesmen asked him to lay down arms. The local jirga also asked him to surrender the arms, but he refused.

This led to an armed attack by tribesmen involving use of heavy weapons. Din Muhammad Shinwari and a woman were killed in the attack.

Witnesses said rockets were also used in the attack. Authorities, however, have denied this.

Shinawri's house was totally damaged and the firing also caused damage to several other houses.

Sardar M. Nawaz, Political Agent of the area, said it was an act of an individual and there was no enmity between local people and Afghan refugees. "They have been living peacefully in the area for 20 years," he said.—NNI

Taliban, opposition swap POWs

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Afghanistan's Taliban and opposition northern alliance have exchanged Prisoners of War in northern Afghan province of Samangon, reports Radio Tehran.

The radio said that the warring factions earlier signed ceasefire agreement to facilitate the exchange of Prisoners of War. After the agreement, the Taliban released 30 soldiers of their opponents and the northern alliance set free 9 commanders of the Taliban.

Ten Taliban commanders join Masood

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Ten Taliban commanders have joined the opposition northern alliance in Ghor province.

Quoting the embassy of the deposed Afghan president Rabbani in Tajik capital Dushanbe, Radio Tehran reported that after the defection of the commanders, Taliban launched offensive in the area and their jets carried out air attacks damaging several houses in the area.

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Taliban planning new 'offensive' amid PoW talks

KABUL (AFP) - Opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood believes that the ruling Taliban militia is planning a new offensive in northern Afghanistan and has conveyed his fears to the United Nations, his spokesman said Sunday.

Masood met with the UN Secretary General's special envoy, Francesco Vendrelle, in the Tajikistan capital Dushanbe on Saturday and told him the Taliban attack was imminent, spokesman Sayed Hussain Anwari said.

'It was conveyed seriously to Vendrelle that the Taliban were preparing for an attack in line with their policy of continuation of fighting,' Anwari said.

Anwari, who attended the Dushanbe meeting, said they had discussed the situation in war-ravaged Afghanistan and possible ways of ending the fighting and speeding up the exchange of prisoners of war (PoWs) between the warring factions.

He said the opposition leader

told the UN envoy that he was in a defensive position because of the international community's interest in Afghan peace.

However Anwari said opposition fighters were on high alert against a possible Taliban attack.

No comment was immediately available from the Taliban. Sources in Kabul said they had noticed an increase in the movement of military personnel and equipment, indicating the possibility of a renewed round of summer fighting.

Vendrelle was appointed as UN peace envoy early this year. He has already met with Taliban foreign minister Wakil Ahmad Mutawakel in the Islamic militia's headquarters of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan.

Anwari's statement follows the resumption of dialogue between Masood's northern alliance and Taliban officials on Wednesday to arrange a prisoner swap. Both Taliban and opposition officials are visiting rival jails to prepare a

list of POWs.

Speaking by satellite telephone from Dushanbe, Anwari said the Taliban wanted the list to include foreign nationals captured by Masood while they had fought alongside the Islamic militia.

'We are holding between 120 to 150 foreigners, including Pakistanis, Arabs, Uzbeks and some others,' he said.

However, the agreement reached in Saudi Arabia under the aegis of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in March did not include foreigners, he added.

Most of Afghanistan is under Taliban control while Masood's forces, ousted from Kabul by the Taliban in 1996, hold a small area in the country's mountainous north.

The Taliban allege that Masood's forces are receiving military backing from neighbouring Tajikistan.

Anwari said Masood and his team would stay in the Central Asian state for several days.

Taliban, Opposition work for prisoner-swap

KABUL (AFP) - The opposing forces in Afghanistan's civil war have agreed to exchange teams to inspect each other's jails in preparation for a swap of prisoners, officials said Monday.

The ruling Taliban militia's Intelligence Interrogation Department chief, Mawlawi Habibullah Reshad, said a five-member team would go to the opposition stronghold in Panjshir, 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of here, on Wednesday.

A similar delegation from opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood would come to Kabul, he said, adding that both teams would simultaneously cross the Shokhi frontlines in northeastern Kapisa province.

Reshad said the International Committee of the Red Cross would facilitate the delicate exchange

between the enemies who have been fighting since 1994.

The two sides agreed to the arrangement on Sunday at a meeting on the frontlines at Shokhi, he added. 'This is the preliminary stage. These teams will visit the jails to list and identify the prisoners,' Reshad said. 'It will take two to three months to arrange for the prisoner swap.'

The teams would also distribute money and medicine to their captured comrades, he said.

The Taliban and opposition forces loyal to ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani agreed to exchange prisoners of war (PoWs) last month during talks sponsored by the Organization of Islamic Conference in Saudi Arabia.

A Masood official said the Taliban were holding around 4,200 opposition loyalists but only 600 to 700 were fighters captured in action.

NATION

26 JUN 2000

Russian attack may destabilise region: Afghan leaders

PESHAWAR - Irrespective of their political, military and personal conflicts, the war-affected Afghans once again have demonstrated their solidarity to protect Afghanistan against any Russian attack.

A few days back Russia has threatened air strikes against Afghanistan.

It accused Taliban for supporting the Chechen Muslims and giving protection to the declared terrorists. Soon after these threats, Afghans from all over the world said that whatever may be their internal rifts but they are determined to forge unity among their ranks for the sovereignty of Afghanistan.

Due to these threats, the local newspapers, particularly Pashto, services of BBC, Radio Tehran, Voice of America and Voice of Germany are extending maximum coverage to this issue.

A detail study of all these media reveals that supporters of former King Mohammad Zahir Shah and other patriotic Afghans who favour a negotiated solution to the Afghan conflict have dominated the news. Most of them have held Taliban responsible for encouraging Russia.

They are of the opinion that Taliban have isolated the country by adopting unrealistic approach towards internal and external issues.

All of the Afghans have denounced the Russian threats. However, war lords like deposed president Prof. Burhan Uddin Rabbani, Gen. Rashid Dostam and Ahmad Shah Masud are playing a role of silent spectator. In fact, they cannot annoy the Russians at this stage when they totally depend on Central Asian Republics.

Most of their relatives are residing in various Central Asian Republics.

"The Russian threat is violating United Nations rules," remarked moderate Afghan leader and Chief of National Islamic Front Pir Syed Ahmad Gillani, while chief of his faction Hizbe Islami Engineer Gulbadin Hekmatyar said that Russians want to avenge their defeat at hands of Afghans.

And Harakat Islami chief Maulvi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi said that Russian must remember the unity among Afghans.

Itchad Islami's Prof. Abdul Rasool Sayaf claimed, Russians would face another historical defeat.

The nationalist Afghan Social Democrats commonly known as Afghan Millat views, "Afghans are bound to shun their internal differences for the sake of their motherland."

Expressing his concern over Russian threats, NIFA chief Pir Syed Ahmad Gillani said that such type of threats and warnings are naked violation of the United Nations principles. Under the UN laws no country has the right to use aggression against other countries.

He urged the world, especially UN, EU and USA to stop Russian attacking Afghanistan.

Gillani said that if Russians have any complaint against Taliban, it should approach UN. He was the Russia should not use force because force always does not serve the purpose better. He said diplomacy and dialogue is the positive way to resolve the issues.

Chief of his faction Hizbe Islami Engineer Gulbadin Hekmatyar has expressed similar views saying, Afghans are loyal and sincere to sovereignty and solidarity of

their motherland. Despite his differences with Taliban, Hekmatyar has dispelled the allegations regarding terrorist camps inside Afghanistan and alleged that through such warnings, Russians are struggling to empower their friends in Afghanistan.

We have already waged a jihad against Russia and are ready in the future as well," he remarked and urged Taliban to revise their policies.

Former Jihadic leader and chief of Harakat Islami Maulvi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi has said that Russian warnings could lead to confrontation in the world.

He appreciated policies of Taliban and said that they have established a peaceful atmosphere in their controlled areas.

He urged the global fora to denounce the warnings given by the Russians.

Prof. Abdul Rasool Sayaf has held the Russians responsible

for destruction in Afghanistan, as they attacked it in 1979.

He added that as a result of such aggression, the former Soviet Union was disintegrated so it should not repeat the old blunder. He said due to internal rifts among Afghans, the Russia has issued these warnings to Afghanistan.

"Taliban must take steps for developing a consensus among the Afghans for the future set up of that country", one of the Afghan intellectuals remarked.

He added that it is crystal clear that Afghans have never accepted any foreign aggression or imposed ruler.

He was of the view that responsibility rests with the peace loving and patriotic Afghans from all over the world to come forward and think ways and means for pulling Afghanistan out of existing crises which is possible through convening an emergency meeting of the traditional Loya Jirga.

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